

Section

6

Drawing—giving form to your ideas

Guiding Faculty

Albert Dorne, Founder
[1904-1965]

Norman Rockwell
Al Parker
Ben Stahl
Steven Dohanos
Jon Whitcomb
Robert Fawcett
Peter Helck
Austin Briggs
Harold Von Schmidt
George Giusti
Fred Ludekens
Bernard Fuchs
Bob Peak
Tom Allen
Lorraine Fox
Franklin McMahon

Ben Shahn
Doris Lee
Dong Kingman
Arnold Blanch
Adolf Dehn
Fletcher Martin
Will Barnet
Syd Solomon
Julian Levi
Joseph Hirsch

Milton Caniff
Al Capp
Dick Cavalli
Whitney Darrow, Jr.
Rube Goldberg
Harry Haenigsen
Willard Mullin
Virgil Partch
Barney Tobey

Giving form to your ideas

Everybody has picture ideas, but what makes the artist different from most people is that he is able — with his skill in drawing and painting — to take what he sees in the world or in his imagination and turn it into a visible work of art. Those compositions that take shape in your mind's eye may be stunningly original, brilliantly colored, nobly conceived, but they aren't pictures yet, and they won't be until you put them down on paper or canvas.

It's fun to try to get an idea down the way you see it, but it isn't always easy. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, you just can't make your hand keep up with your eye. That's discouraging because your picture looks pretty uninteresting compared to the marvelous vision you first thought of. However, keep in mind that everyone who has ever painted has experienced the same frustrations. As your drawing skill increases, you'll have more success in making your drawings and paintings say what you want them to say.

By now you've developed some skill with your mediums and tools; you've become more aware, better able to use your eyes to see as an artist does. And you've learned something about relationships in pictures. You know that one shape (or object) affects another — that everything you put into your picture area is important to the whole composition. You've worked with colors and seen how they affect each other.

Now in this section you'll learn about other means artists use, and you'll acquire new skills to help you in making pictures. You'll experiment with gesture drawing to feel out the spirit and movement of your subject. You'll explore the effects you can get through the interplay of light and dark; you'll learn how to create the illusion of depth on a flat canvas. Finally, you'll use these and all the artist's other means you have studied and practiced so far, to make pictures of your own — expressed in your own way.



again. Artists have reached across the bounds of custom, country and century to borrow the artistic approaches of other eras, long dead. There's a kinship as close as brother to brother between Verrocchio's statue of young David and the Greek boy from Marathon, created around 300 B.C. The symbolic face of "The Merciful Mother," carved into the stone of a medieval church, has its echo in Picasso's startling girl before a mirror. There are striking similarities, too, between the twentieth-century woman by Ben Johnson and the Egyptian queen next to her, painted over a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

You'll find other likenesses if you look for them. No art period in history is "best," no artist has ever found a style that is right for everyone. But each of these faces, like all good works of art, reflects one common characteristic — the artist's own strong sense of what, to him, is real.

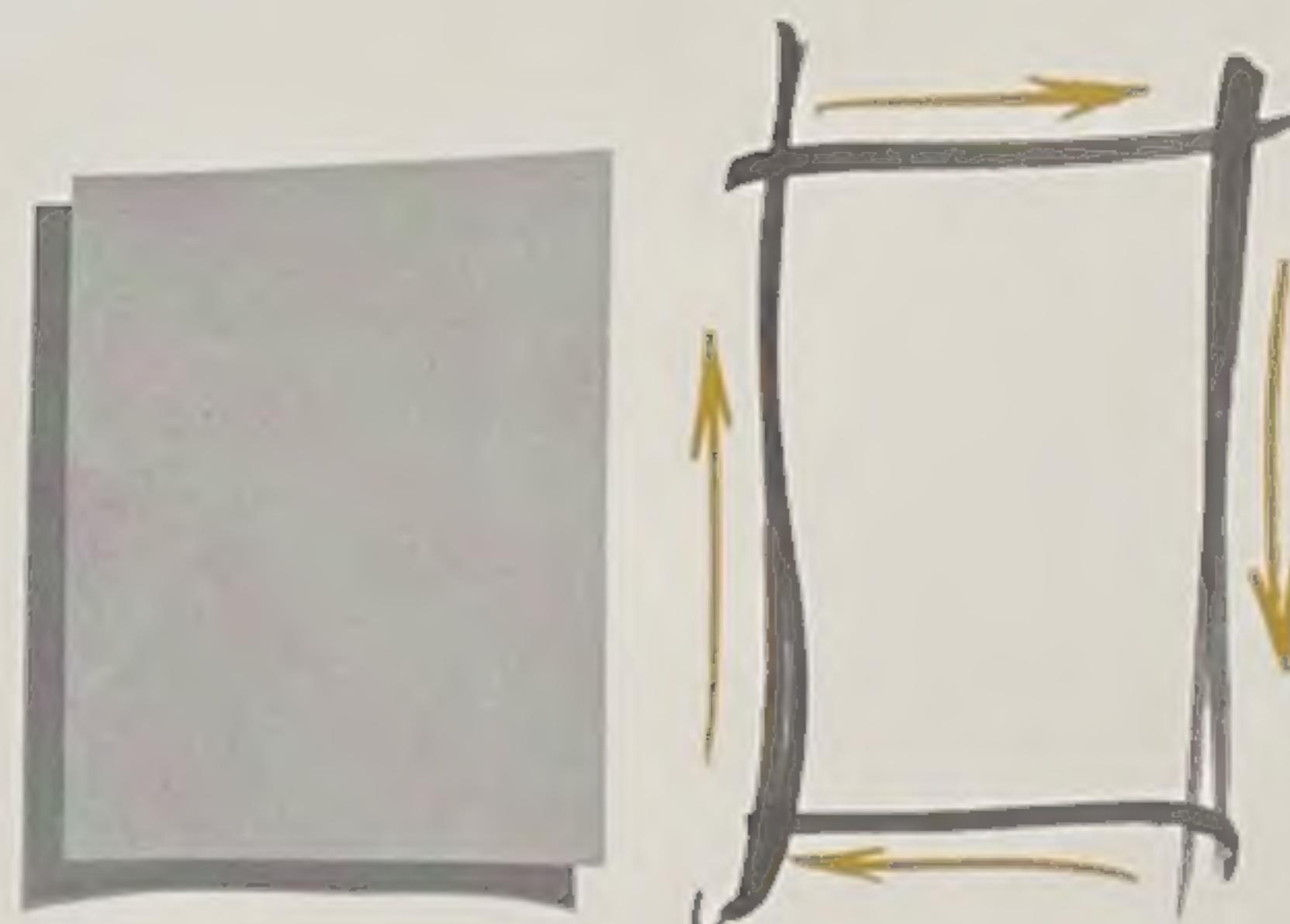


The “spirit” of the form

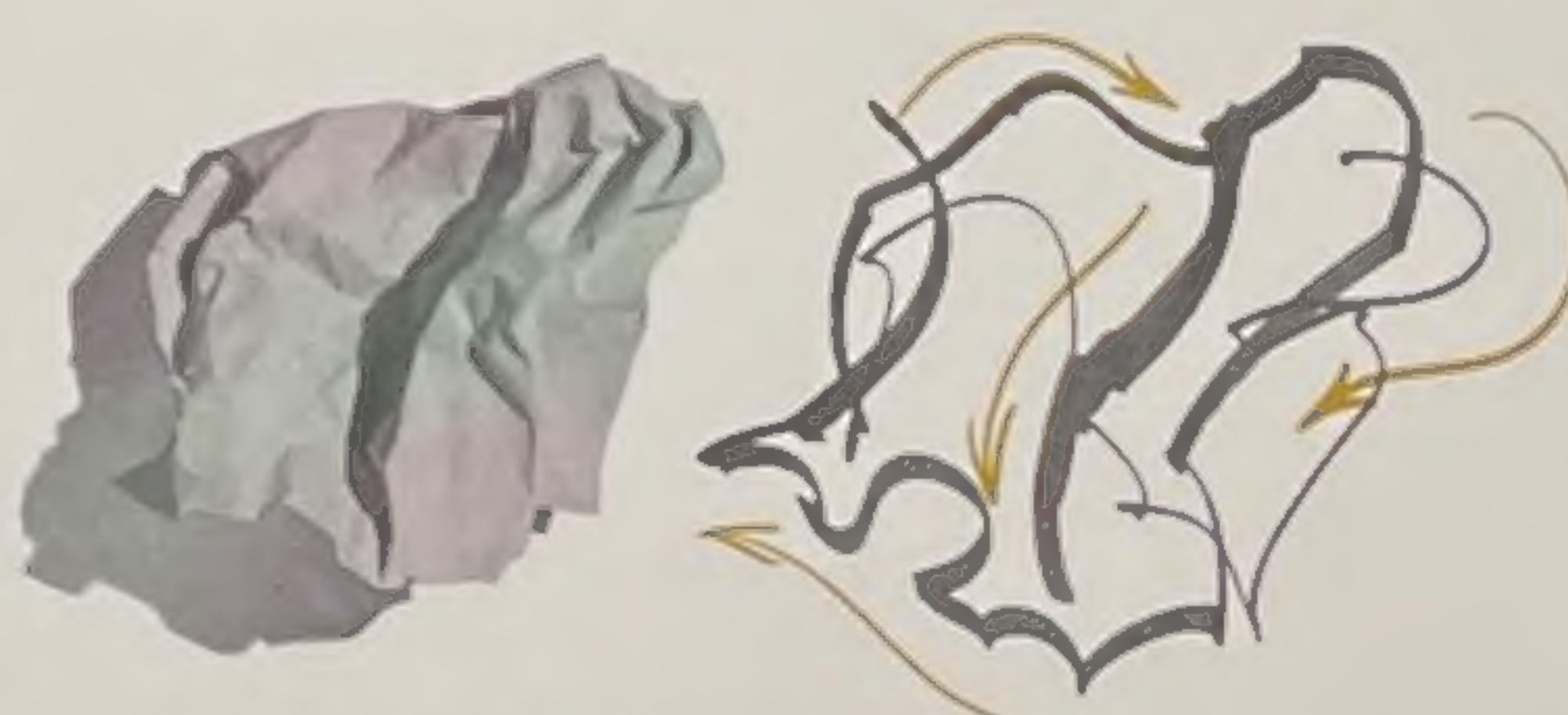
Now we want you to try something that may be new to you. It's a fast, scribby way of drawing in which you try to capture on paper the gesture of your subject. You don't draw the subject itself; you draw what it's doing. Gesture drawing is the artist's means of making visible what he senses or understands about his subject; it's his way of drawing the essential spirit of its form.

Brief, immediate, a gesture sketch might be no more than a single tenuous line, brushed on paper to describe the bend of a fragile stem of weed in strong wind. It is the *bend* that you'd be drawing, not the weed; the bend would be the gesture. On a calm day that stem would have a different gesture, and in the rain a different one still.

Look at the gesture drawings on these pages. You can see even inanimate objects, like pitchers and windmills, make a kind of gesture that you can feel and draw. So do mountains. The bold, brief sketch above traces the gesture of the Matterhorn.



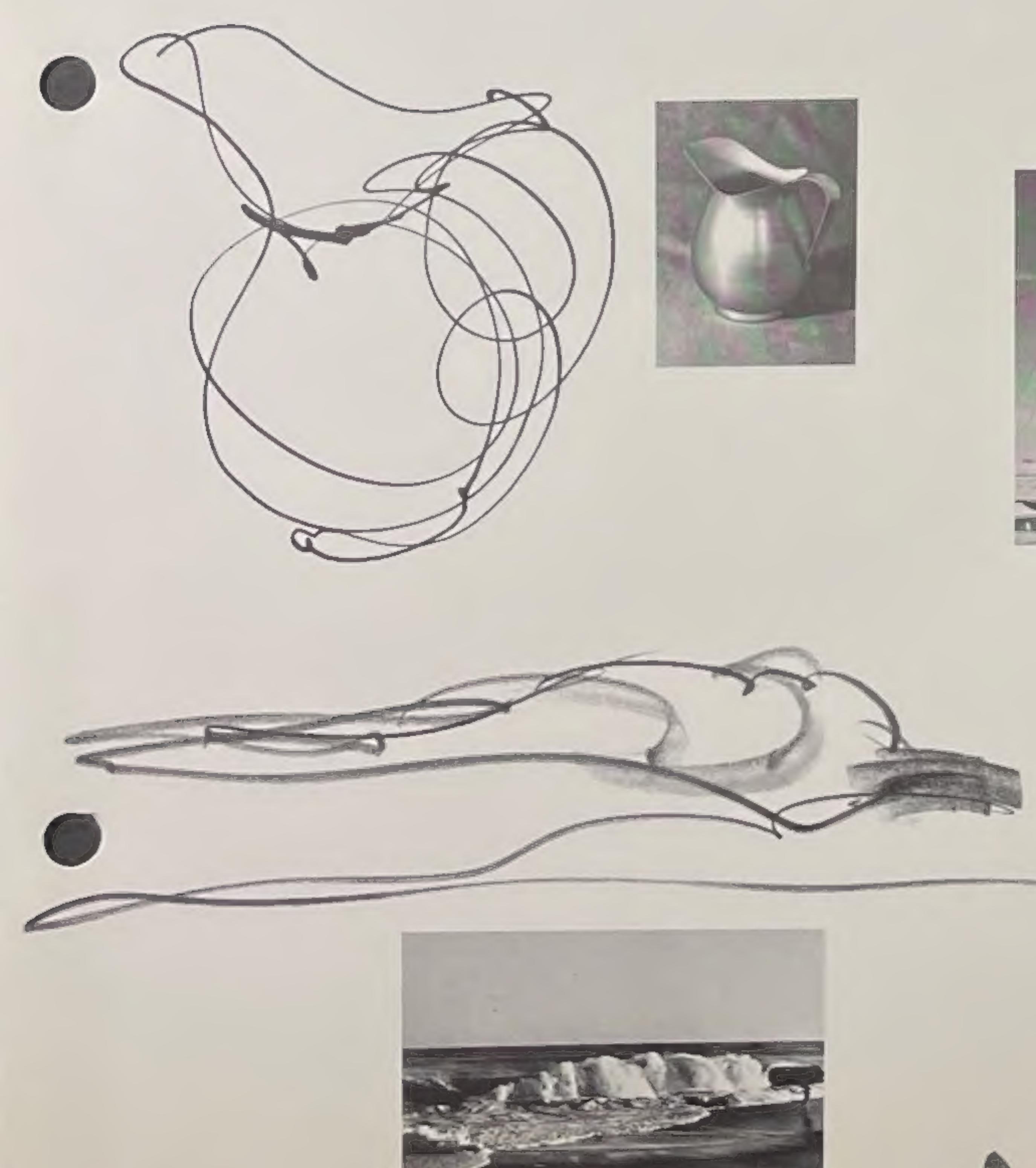
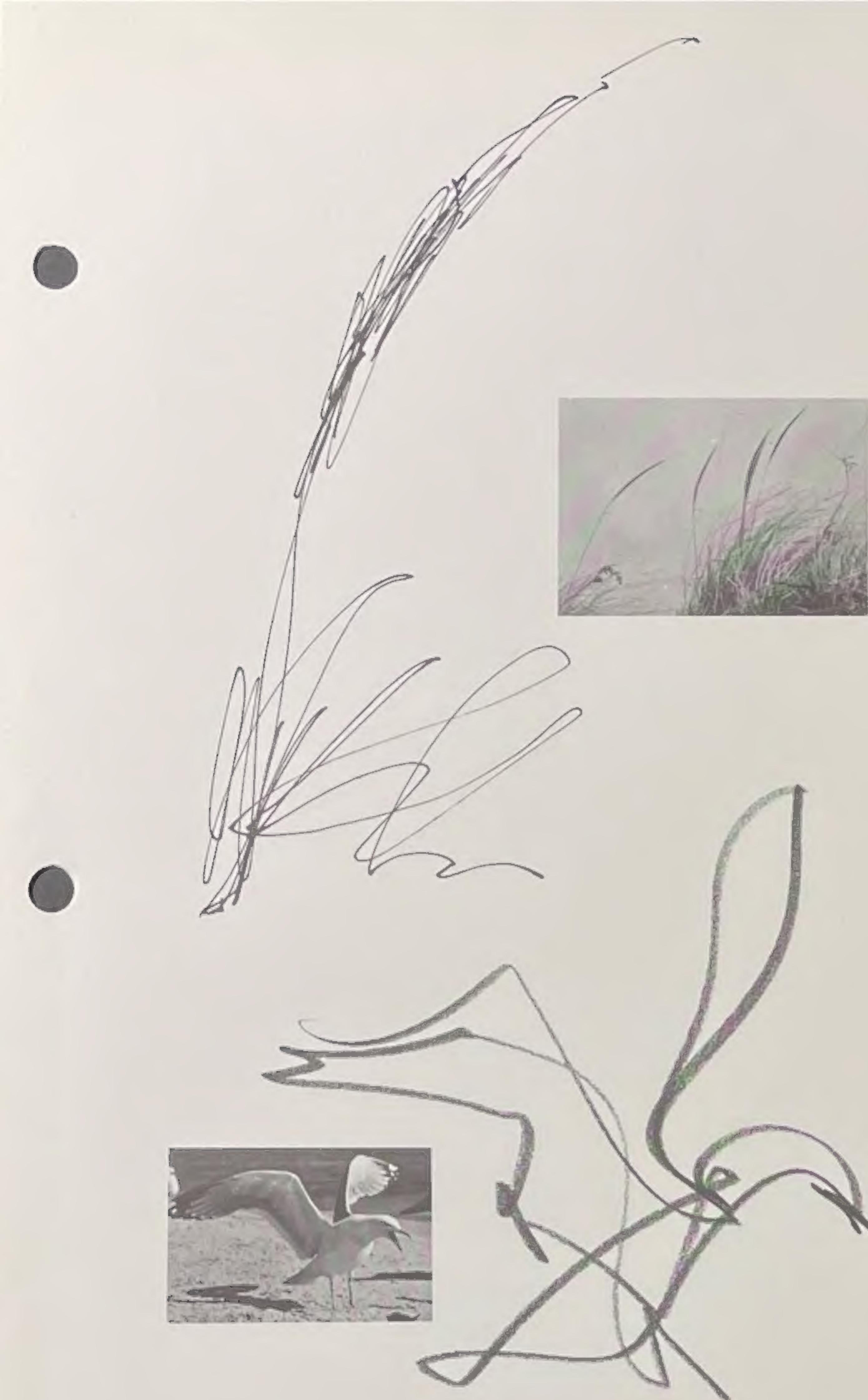
Even a piece of paper has gesture. Lying flat and smooth, it suggests orderliness, care, precision.



Crumpled, its attitude changes. Now you can sense a gesture that's loose, carefree. Be aware of what your subject is doing when you make a gesture sketch.

Photograph by Ewing Galloway



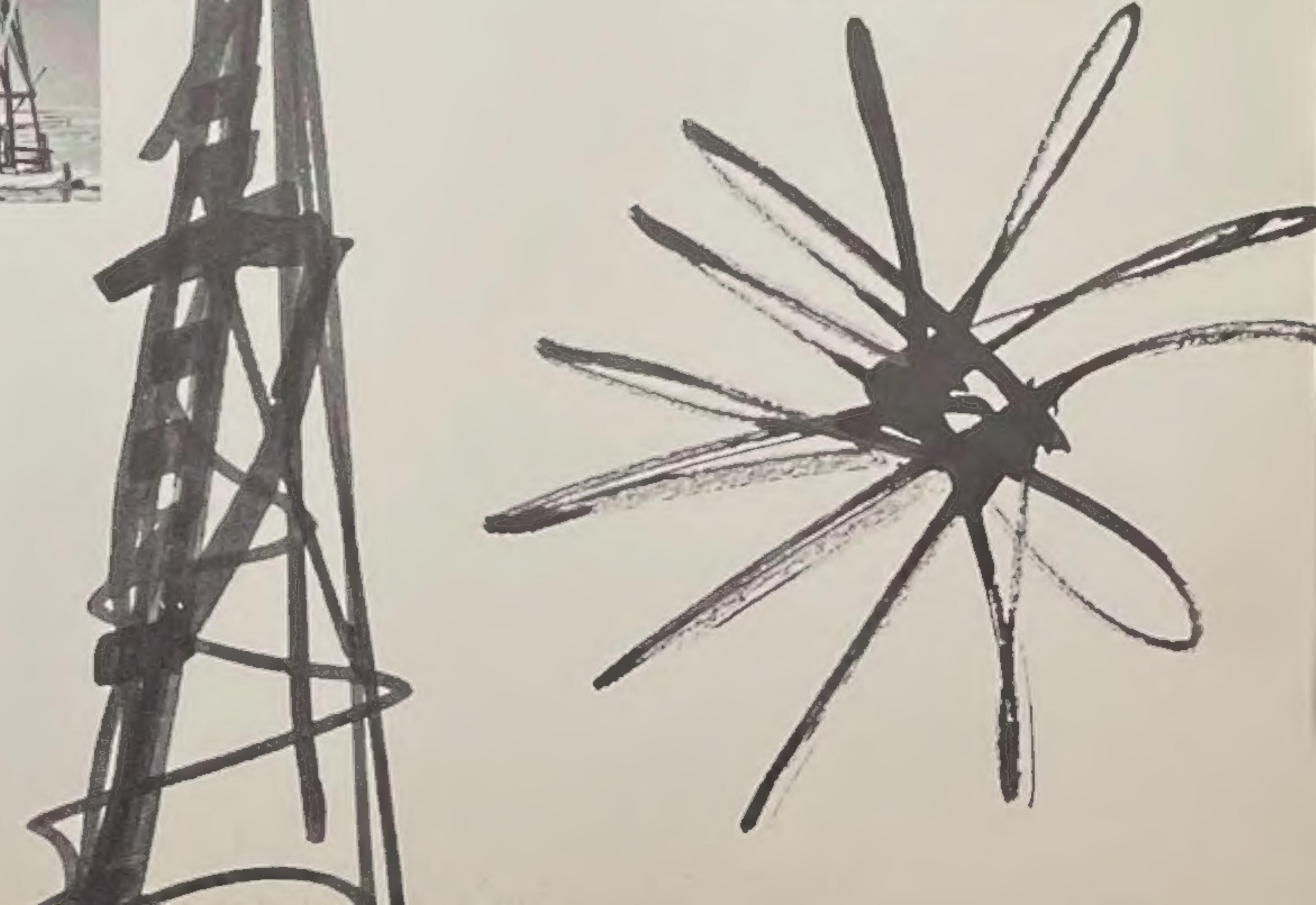
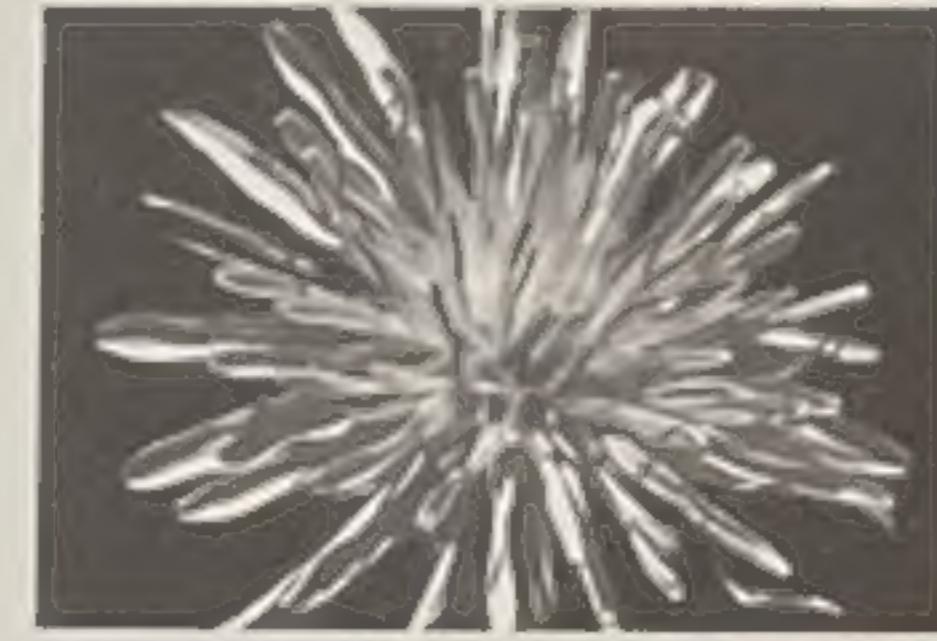


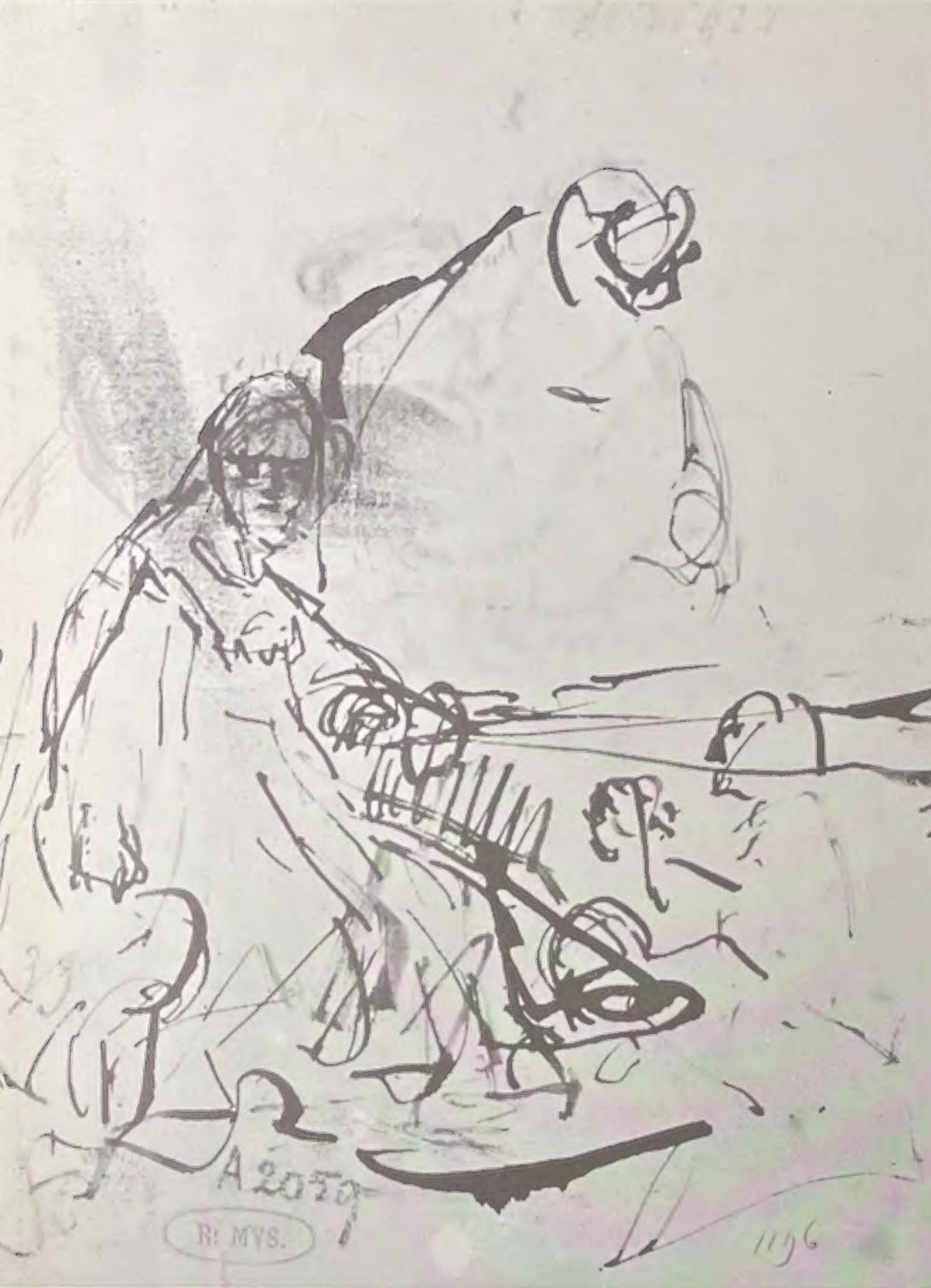
Make your own gesture drawings

There's no better way to get acquainted with your subject, to feel out its form and spirit, than by the gesture sketch. That's why many artists begin with the gesture of their subject when they make a drawing.

You'll have fun with gesture sketches. They're very fast and it's fascinating to see how close you can get to the essence of your subject with just a few swift strokes. Make lots of them — it may take you a while to train your eye and hand to see and draw so quickly. Use cheap paper and any drawing tool that's direct and fast. Brush and ink would be fine; so would pencil, or crayon or charcoal.

It's easier, of course, to capture the gesture of something that's alive — like an old workhorse, or a dancer on television, or a plant heavy with blooms. Make gesture sketches of living, moving things, but pick inanimate subjects, too. You'll be able to feel their spirits if you really try. A crumbling stone wall, an old house, a sports car, a fence, a gate, a lamppost, a flower cart — they all have gesture. Just look very closely and draw very fast.





Shapes in Bones, 1656



Henry Moore, the English sculptor, feels out forms in loose, quick pencil sketches for the subjects he will ultimately carve in stone.

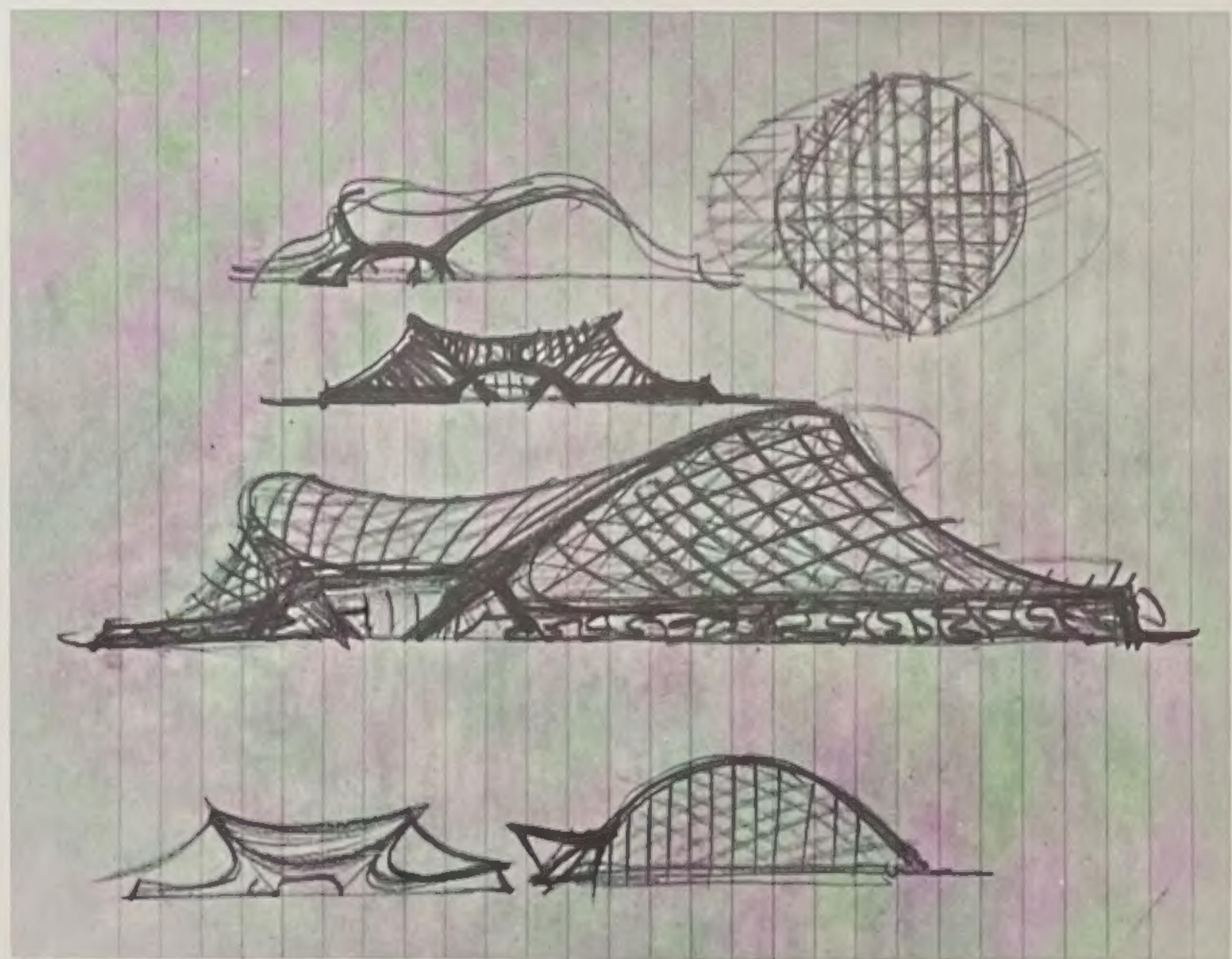
Mordechai Kneeling Before Esther and Ahasverus
Printroom Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Artistic ideas begin with gesture

Artists make the same kind of gesture drawings you've been exploring to feel out the essence of an object. They also draw gesture as a beginning step in composing and planning, to capture the spirit that will carry over and express itself in a completed work of art. Without that touch of life, that expressive force, a picture is no more than an arrangement of paint on a dead canvas, a piece of sculpture only a shape carved in cold stone, a building merely a structure. The drawings here were all made by masters, each in a different field of art. Do you think they capture the spirit of their subjects?

Rembrandt often made gesture studies of the subjects he subsequently brought to life on canvas. Above, with a few masterful scribbles, he captures the spirit of a scene from the Bible.

From these drawings and many others by Eero Saarinen there emerged a graceful building of steel, glass and concrete. At this stage, the architect was concerned not so much with structural details as with the rhythm and flow of the building.



From Drawings by Architects by Claudio Coulin
Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962



Still Life with Basket of Apples, Paul Cézanne
Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago

Gesture is still here in the artist's finished work

Distorting natural shapes was one of Cézanne's ways of bringing out the gesture of every form he painted. If an apple wasn't quite round, he exaggerated its irregularity. If a bottle looked perfectly symmetrical, he just barely flattened one of its sides. Here, his slight distortions bring life and spirit to such homey objects as apples spilling out of a basket, a bottle of wine, a plateful of neatly stacked biscuits, and a rumpled cloth on a table that's just slightly tipped. One critic said of Cézanne: "He re-created [nature] in his own terms and, in doing so, clarified her. He makes us more aware of her essence."



Light and dark

Lights and darks have important roles to play in picture-making — you'll need to decide how you want to use them when you plan your composition. Will it be for *clarifying the shapes* in your picture? Will you need them to create the illusion of *volume* and *solid form*? Will they help to convey *mood* and *emotion*? Very often you'll need to use value in all of these roles. Let's consider each of them in turn.

Clarifying shapes with light and dark

In nature, contrasts in values help us distinguish one object from another. In pictures, too, we use lights and darks to define and clarify shapes. There's a pretty extreme example of this above: we've made a white cat vanish almost completely by putting him on white paper. The black cat would vanish, too, of course, if he were on a black background. Even a very light gray background will bring the white cat back, as you can see. All it takes is a little contrast in values.

This principle of contrasting darks and lights holds when you're arranging a more complicated composition, like those at right. Note how clearly each cat stands out against the others in the bottom picture, how hard it is to separate one from another in the picture above it.

We should add that there may be times when you'll want to obscure shapes, as we've done with the cats at upper right. Tom Allen used this approach to create an atmosphere of suspense and lurking danger in the painting on page 12, Section 3. Obscuring shapes, however, takes just as much control, just as thorough an understanding of contrast and its effect on shape. Whether you want your shapes to be clearly visible or indistinct, the important thing is to *plan* your light and dark pattern so that it helps your picture say what you want it to say.



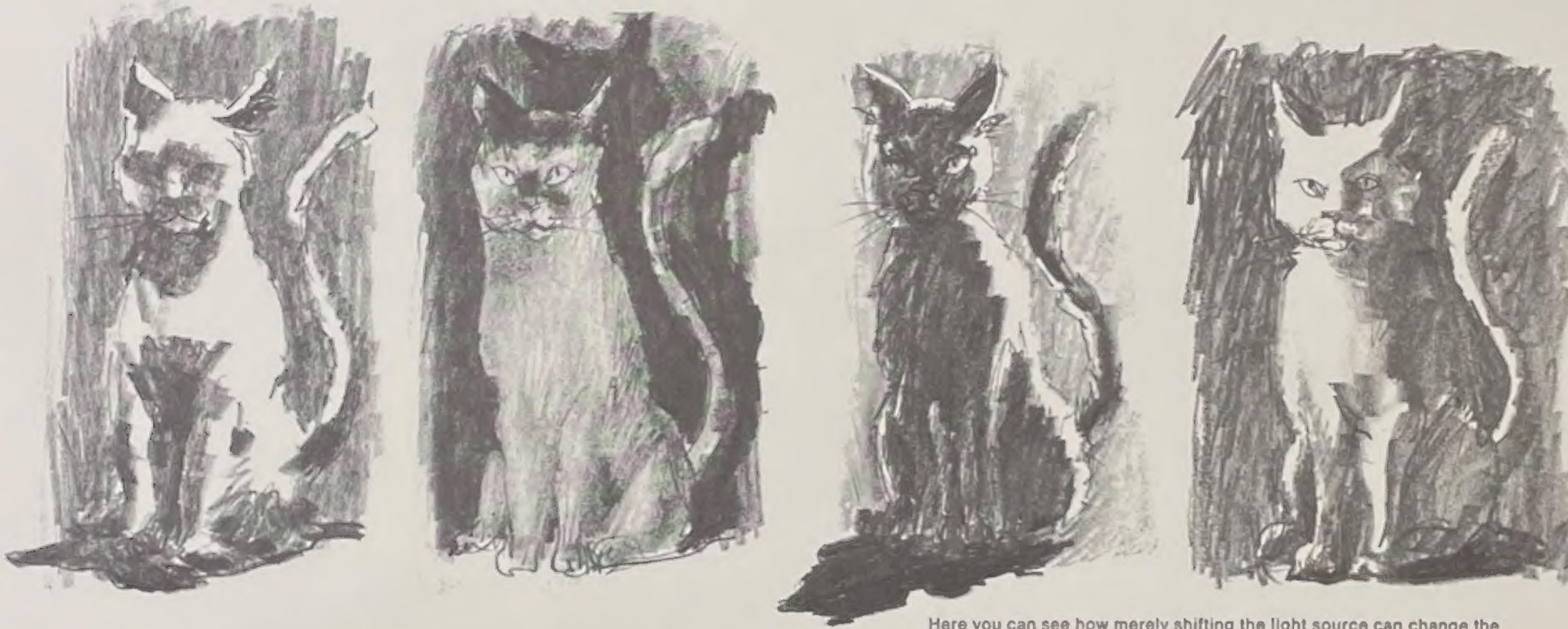


Creating volume with light and dark

We can give pictures the illusion of volume, or solid form, by borrowing what the eye sees in nature—the phenomenon of light and shadow. Whenever light strikes a three-dimensional object it divides that object into a light side and a dark side and causes the object to cast a shadow. To create the illusion of solid form in your pictures all you have to do is arrange your lights and darks in a way that creates the same visual effect. Look at the nicely rounded cat above. The light is falling on him from above and slightly to the right. His top and right sides, therefore, are light, his underneath and

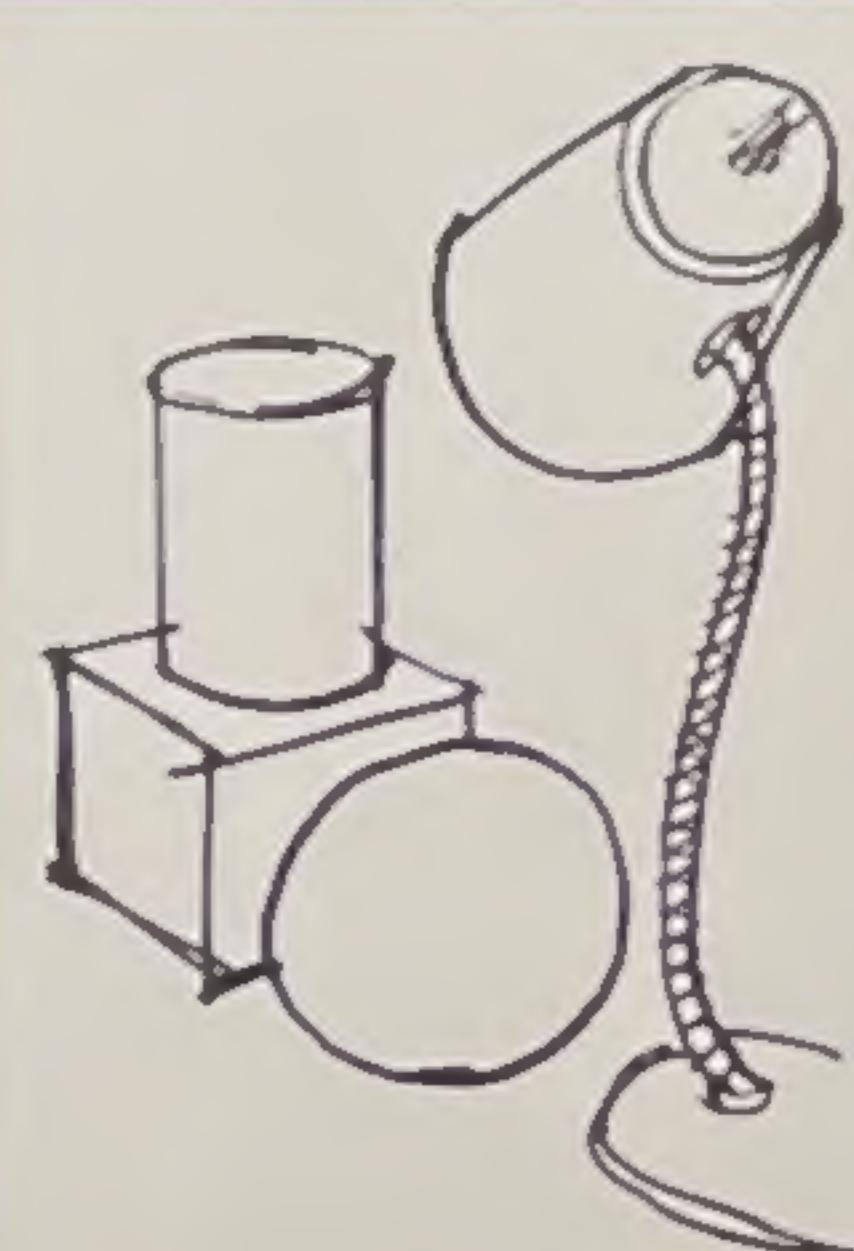
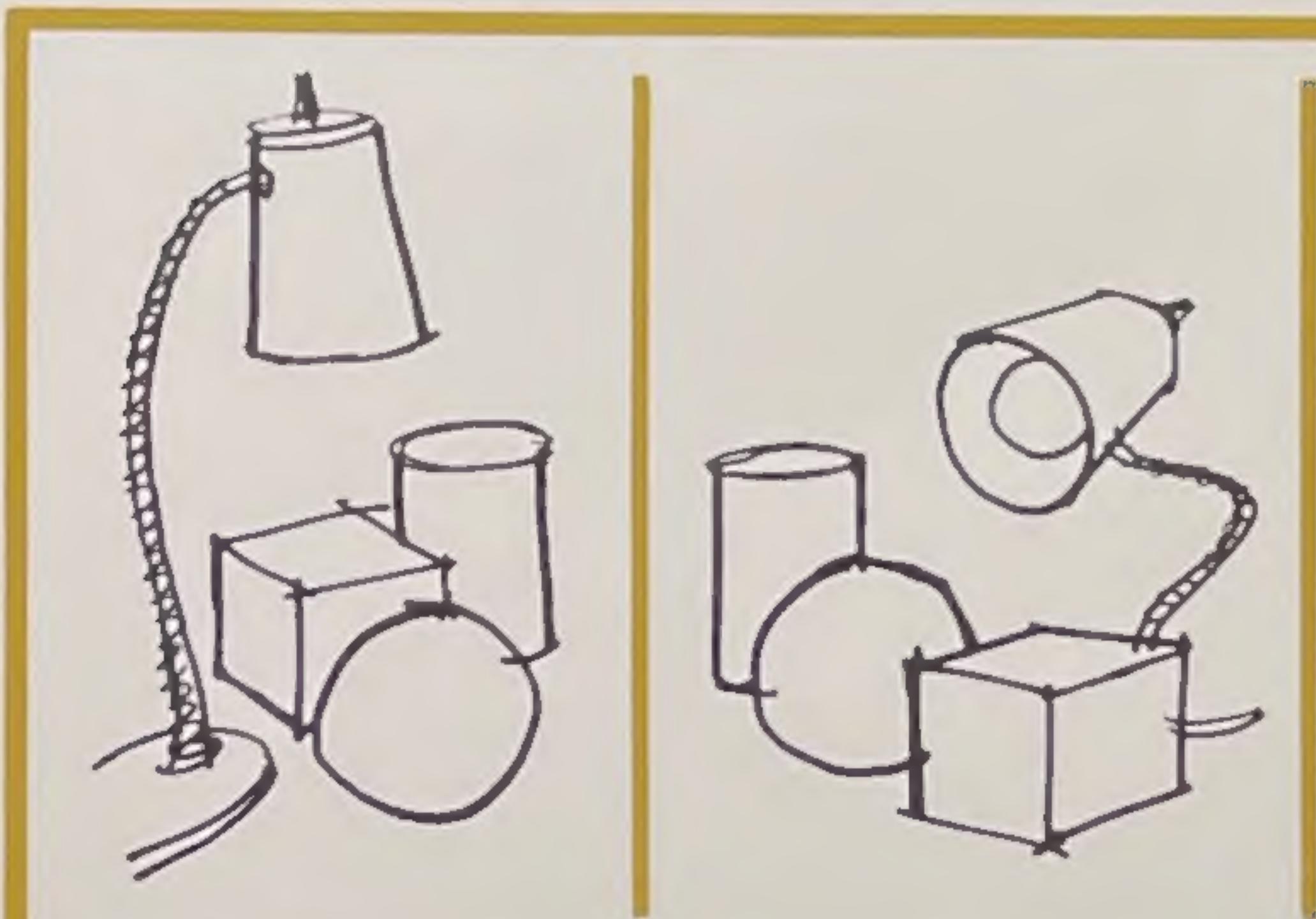
left sides are dark, and he casts the dark value of a shadow down and to the left. By arranging darks and lights as we see them in nature, we give a flat cat a third dimension.

The effects of light and shadow are easier to explain than they are to draw. Actually it takes a great deal of study and observation to understand the way light falls on an object, and much practice before you'll be able to capture it on paper. As you observe, keep asking yourself where the light is coming from. Your placement of lights and darks will depend on that.

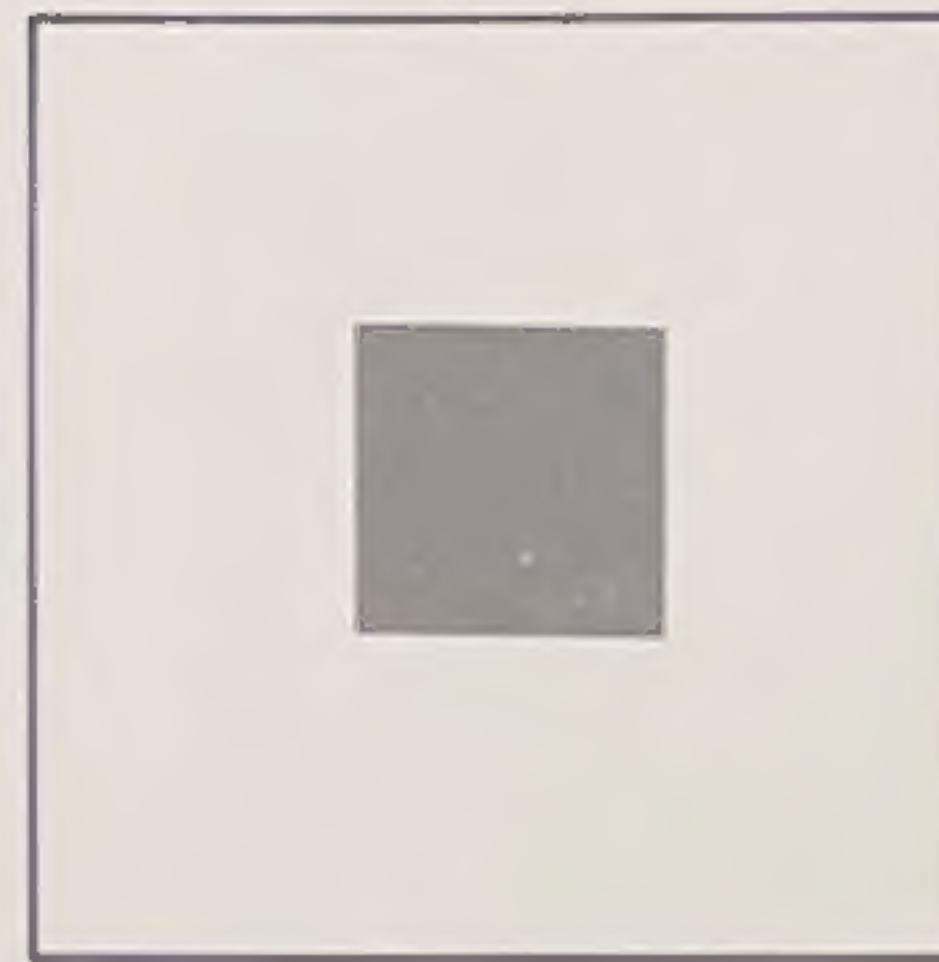


Here you can see how merely shifting the light source can change the feeling of form in the same subject. Study these four cats—can you tell where the light is coming from?

Experiment with light and shadow



Select three objects that have the cube, cylinder and sphere shapes we've drawn in the diagrams. A small plain box, a grapefruit and a plastic drinking cup would be fine. Arrange them close together on a table beside a lamp with a strong bulb. Turn on the lamp and you'll see that it lightens the objects on one side, darkens them on the other, and causes them to cast shadows. Make a sketch in pencil or charcoal of what you see, and then switch the position of the lamp, rearrange the objects, and observe how the light and shadows shift and change. Again, draw what you see. What happens to the shadow of the grapefruit when it falls on the cup? How can you make the shadows grow longer? What happens when you hold the light directly above these objects?

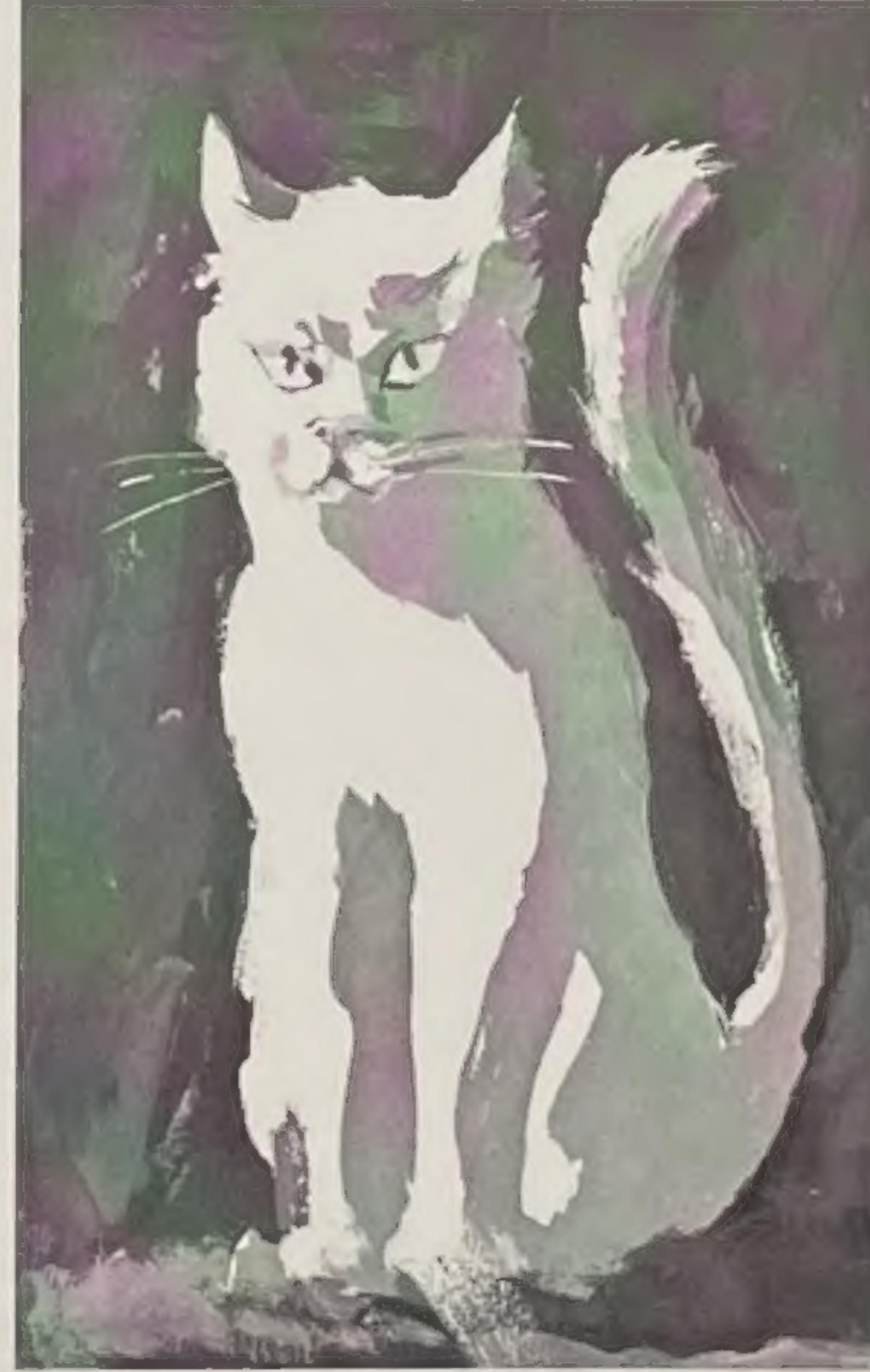
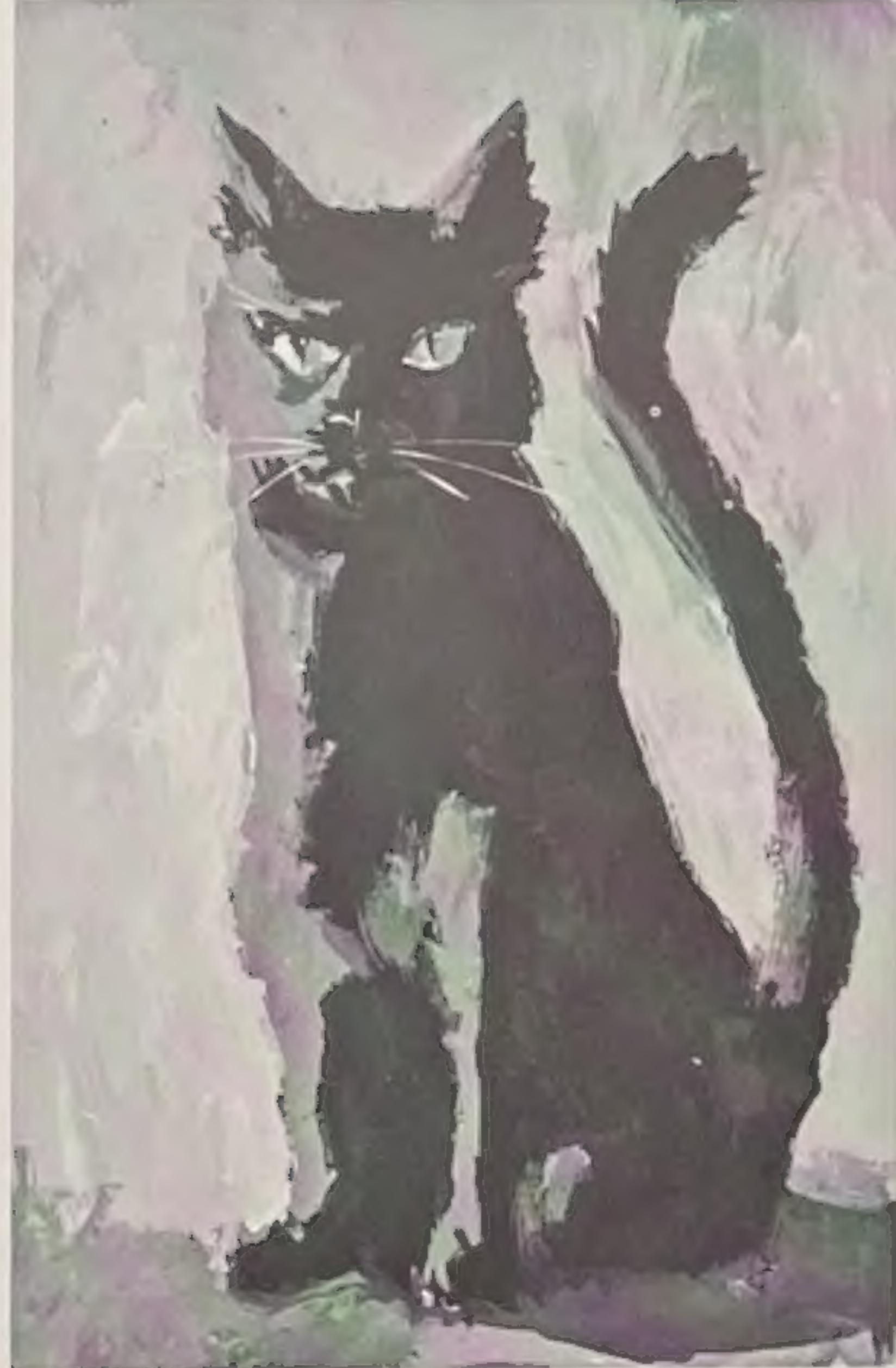


Values influence and change each other

A value is never absolute. The minute you put it with other values it changes, growing lighter or darker according to the way the other values affect it. The two gray squares above, for example, are exactly the same shade, although the black background makes the one at left look lighter.

Every time you turn on your television set you see optical illusions like this. The blackest black you see on the screen is only as dark as the gray of the screen when the set's turned off. It just *looks* black because it's darker than all the other grays.

It's important for you to know about this interplay of values because you can make it work for you in your pictures. One shade of gray can be made to look lighter or darker by the way you relate it to other values. That's what we've done in the sketches at right. The white cat skulking down an alley in the moonlight and the black cat in bright sunlight are really both painted with the same gray. They only appear to be dark and light because of the way they're affected by the values around them.



How can you paint a dark shadow on a black cat?

What is blacker than black? Since the answer to that is nothing, you have to make the unshadowed part lighter than black, as we've done at far left. The white cat is white on the side that faces the light, and his shadow a light gray. In one case a gray value colors the part of the cat that is in the light; in the other, the same gray value is the shadow. Values are dark or light *only* in their relation to other values.



Using values to express mood

Values can speak impressively for us when we use them to express mood, emotion and atmosphere in our drawings. Turn back to Section 3, page 12, and look at the paintings there. Each of the artists, you'll remember, worked in a value key that fitted and *underscored* the mood he wanted to convey. Certain subjects seem to go naturally with certain parts

of the value scale. The high-key tones speak for light, happy subjects; gloomy ones need dark, heavy values for expression. You can use values to change the mood of subjects, too. Even with something as simple as the head of a cat you can evoke almost any mood just by the way you arrange your values and by the key you play them in.



Rembrandt understood the expressive possibilities of light and shadow and manipulated them with a dramatic force that has never been equaled. Here he kept most of his composition in darkness in order to intensify the brilliance of his lightest tones. As a result, light plays dazzlingly over the golden helmet. More gently it illuminates the quiet face. It touches the dark shadows, too, but just enough to delineate the shoulders of the man

Monet's fascination with light led him to paint certain subjects over and over, in different lights, in different seasons, at different times of day. This picture, one of many he painted of the Rouen cathedral, was done in the light of early morning. Even though the value key is very high, the shadows are dark enough to give depth to the arches and feel out the texture of the sunlit stone

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Chester Dale Collection



Picasso was not concerned with the natural fall of light when he arranged his jagged pattern of values. Strong, angular, slashing, these shapes of dark and light set the stark stage for this violent protest to the bombing of a Spanish village.



Man with a Golden Helmet
National Museum, Dahlem, West Berlin

Light and dark in painting

While these paintings are as different as they can be in subject, point of view and style, you can see that each one is based on a masterful arrangement of lights and darks that helps convey a particular mood and feeling. Lights and darks play against each other in other ways we've been discussing, too, in clarifying shapes and creating an illusion of solid form.



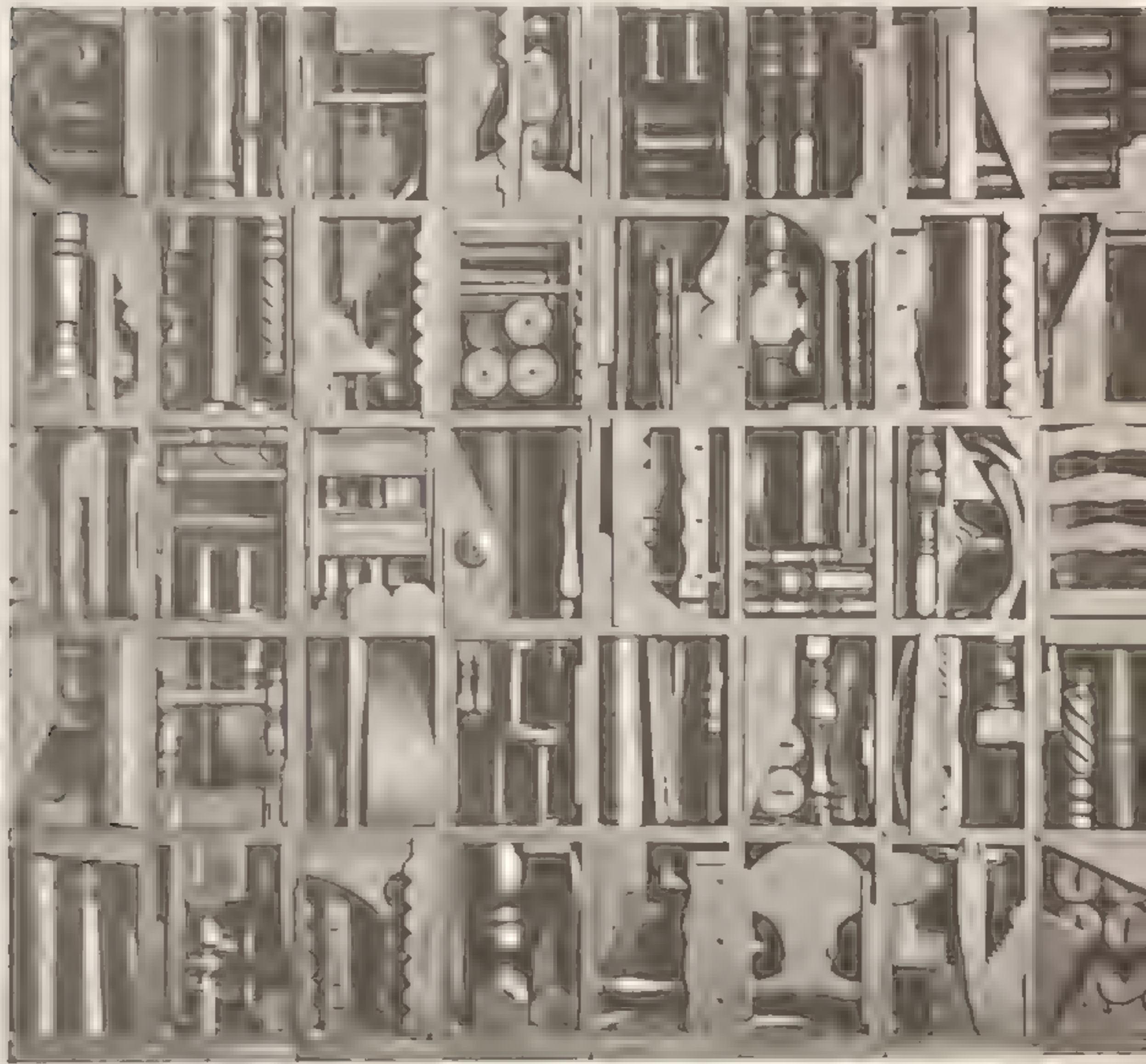
Guernica, 1937
On extended loan to the Museum of Modern Art, New York,
from the artist



Courtesy *Vogue*, © 1959, Condé Nast Publications, Inc.

To produce the striking contrast of light and dark in this portrait of Sophia Loren, Irving Penn illuminated only the face and a portion of the background, leaving the hat in dark shadow. The strong value contrast between the oval face and the larger shape of the hat instantly compels our attention.

Louise Nevelson paints an assemblage black, then depends on the subtle probings of light to feel out and define its forms.



Tide, Tide
Albert A. List Family Collection
Photograph courtesy Pace Gallery, New York

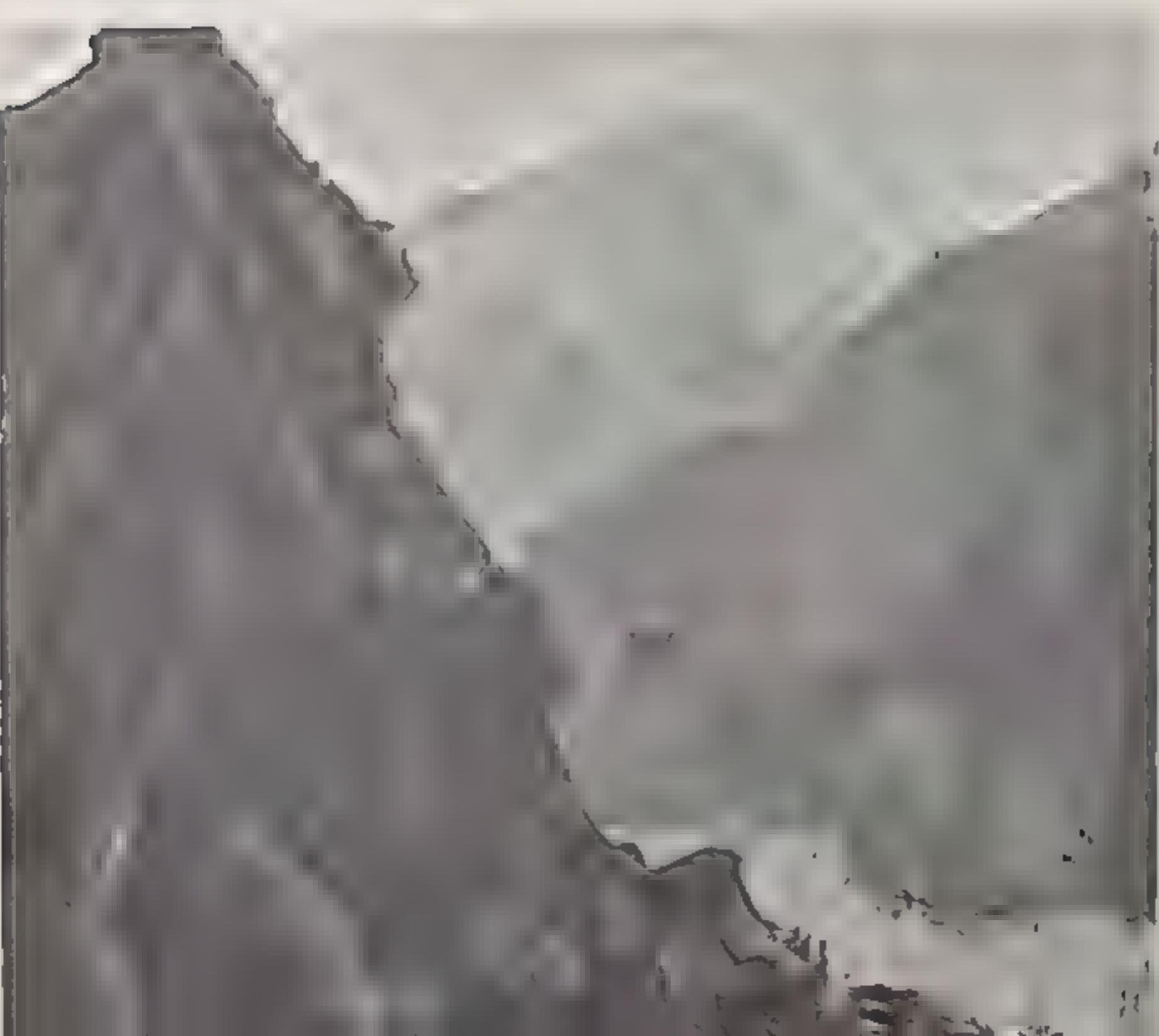
...and in other art forms

Lights and darks are as necessary in sculpture, assemblage and photography as they are in painting, for exactly the same reasons. You can see that these artists, too, use light and shadow in their compositions as a means of expression, to create solid form, and to clarify and define shapes.



Henry Moore's massive molded forms seem both strengthened and softened by the way light and shadow fit over and into their volumes and voids.

Reclining Woman
City Art Museum of Saint Louis



Creating depth

Nature plays tricks on our eyes when we look far into the distance. Objects grow smaller and dimmer, parallel lines seem to move closer together. Because these illusions are always associated with distance, the artist puts them into his paintings when he wants to create the appearance of depth.



Converging lines

Parallel lines in nature, such as railroad tracks, the edges of a straight road and the furrows in a freshly plowed field appear to close in on each other as they move away from us, and to finally converge at the horizon.



Diminishing size

A faraway object looks smaller than the same thing nearby, even though they are actually the same size. At left, the artist has used this illusion to put distance between three trees and give depth to his picture.



Overlapping shapes

When we see one object in front of another, we know that it is closer to us than the object it partly conceals. That is why the overlapping of shapes in a picture creates the illusion of space.



Softening atmosphere

Objects you see in the distance not only look smaller, they are grayer, hazier and less detailed than the objects near you. They are blurred and softened by the atmosphere that is between them and your eyes.

Depth in painting

Here three artists, painting in different centuries from far different points of view, have all given the illusion of depth to their pictures—each for a different purpose, and all with unusually dramatic effect.

The strangely empty building at left leads our eye down a long, deserted street. De Chirico has exaggerated the principles of converging lines and diminishing size to create a weird, unnatural scene.



Mystery and Melancholy of a Street

This poetic, barren landscape looks as though it goes on for miles. Note how sharply the artist painted detail in the foreground, how the background peaks recede into misty atmosphere. Overlapping strengthens the illusion that the mountains reach far, far back into the distance.



Arches, columns and people grow smaller, lines begin to converge as they move toward the building in the background. Tintoretto has used these devices, as well as overlapping, to give us a feeling of vast open space in his composition.

Landscape in the Silesian Mountains, Casper David Friedrich
Neue Pinakothek Museum, Munich

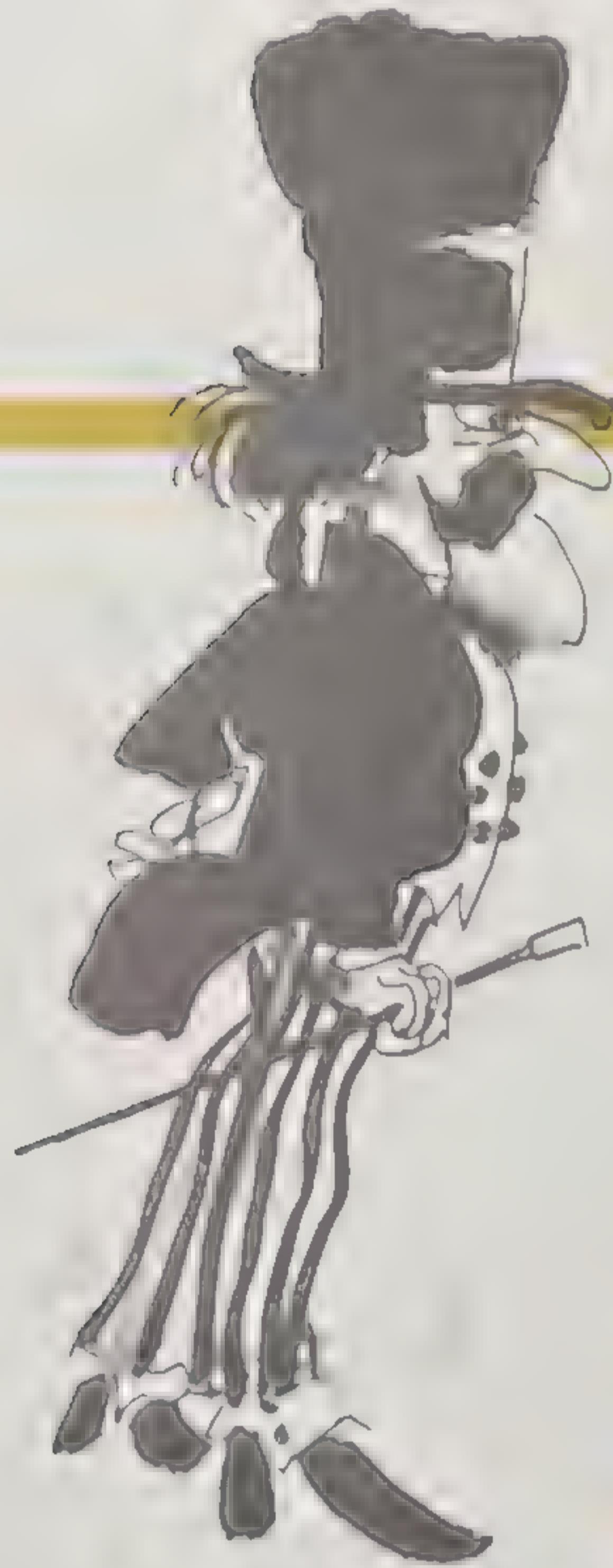
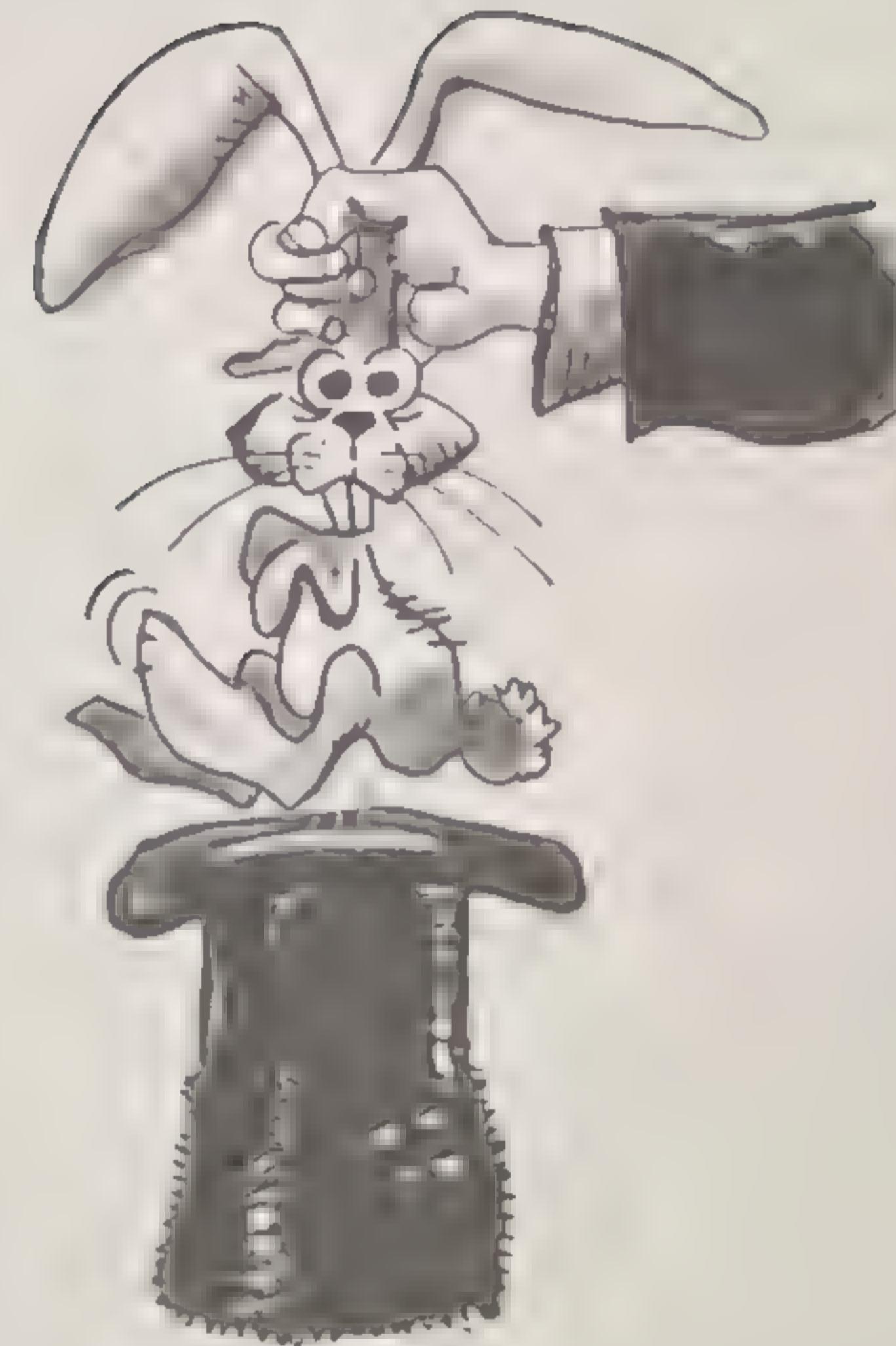


It's magic

We like to be fooled by magic and illusion. It's intriguing to look at a picture drawn on a flat two-dimensional surface and be led, by the skill of the artist, into seeing depth that we know isn't really there at all.

Now that you know about the techniques that artists use to conjure up the illusion of a third dimension (overlapping shapes, diminishing size, converging lines, softening atmosphere), try them in your own picture compositions.

None of these techniques is difficult to master, but one takes a little more knowledge than the others. That is the process of creating depth by drawing parallel lines that converge, seemingly, in the distance. This kind of perspective is based on two scientific ideas—eye level and vanishing point. When you understand them and use them correctly in your drawing, you'll be able to handle perspective convincingly enough to create depth that looks natural to the eye. If that isn't magic, what is?



Eye level

The eye level is an imaginary line across a picture that marks the level of the artist's eye as he looks at and draws his subject. You'll see that it affects the appearance of everything in a picture.



Vanishing point

The vanishing point is a spot on the horizon at which parallel lines in a picture (as in nature) appear to converge and disappear. It is always on the eye level.

The effect of different eye levels

Changing your eye level changes the way an object or a scene looks to you. The more drastically you alter your position, the more pronounced the change will be. When you choose a subject, you should try drawing it from a number of different positions — above, below, far above if possible,

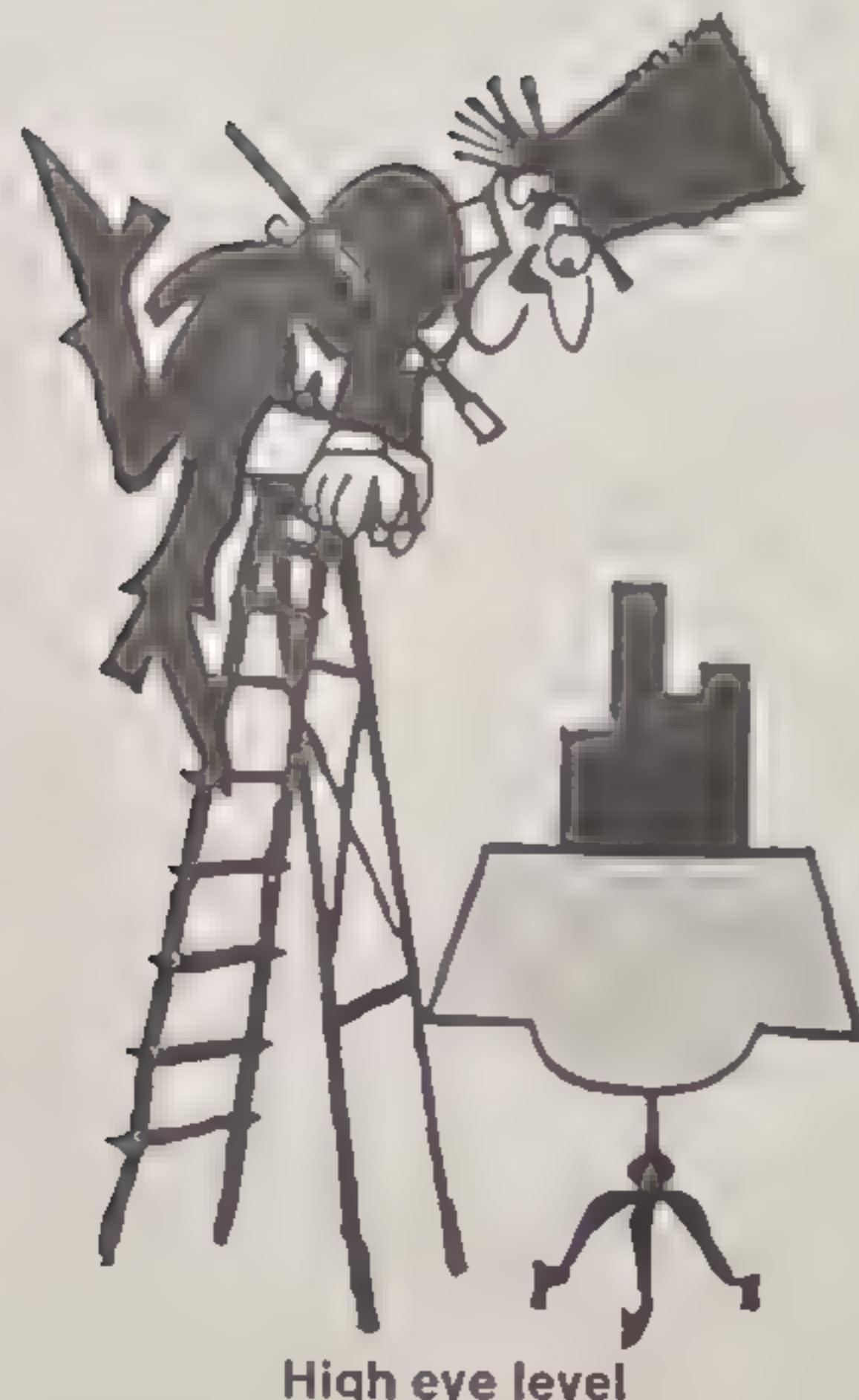
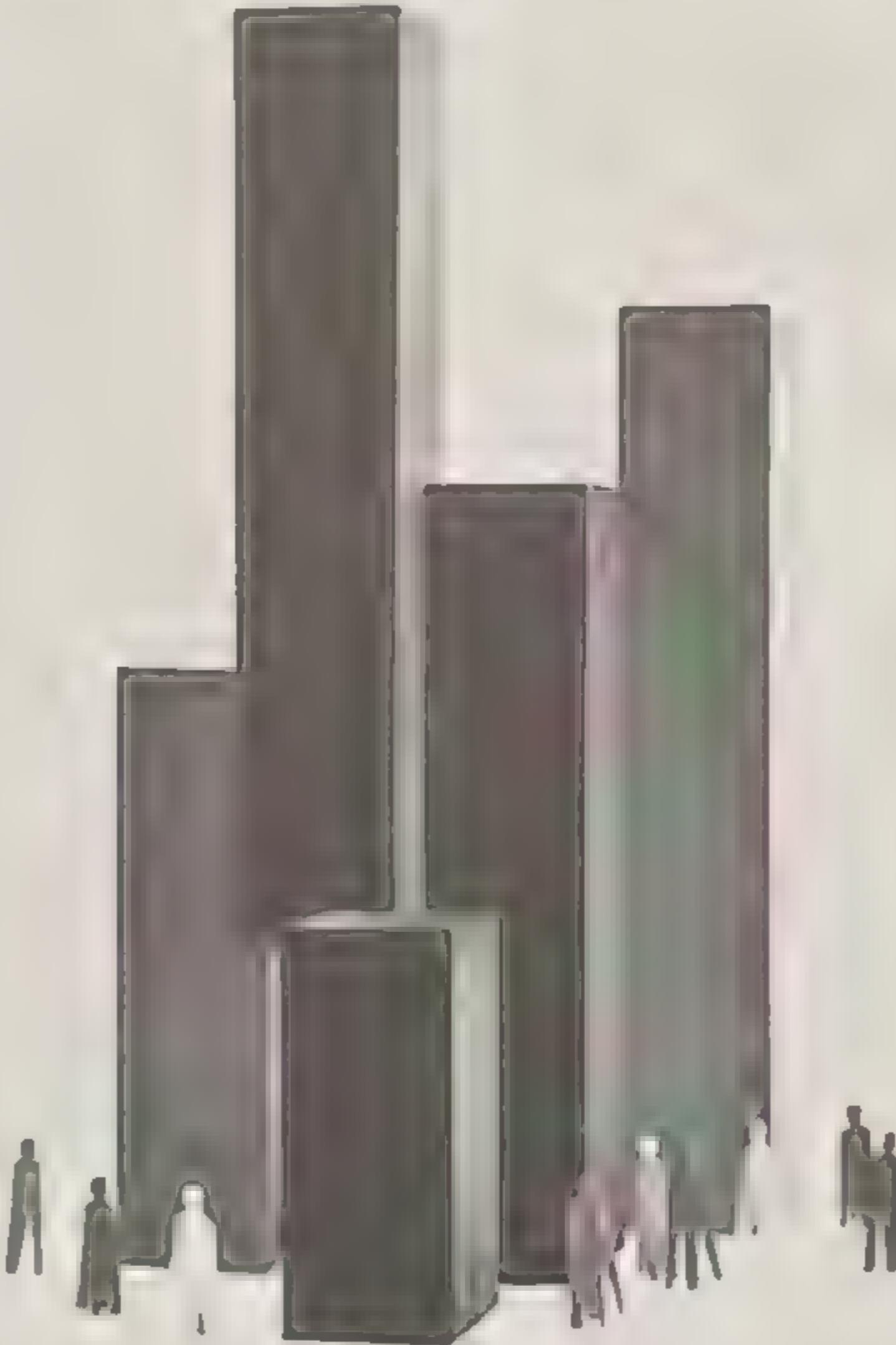
far below. A straight-on point of view isn't always the most expressive or effective, as you can tell by comparing the three drawings below. The tall buildings look much more dramatic in their tallness when they're seen and drawn from a high or low eye level.



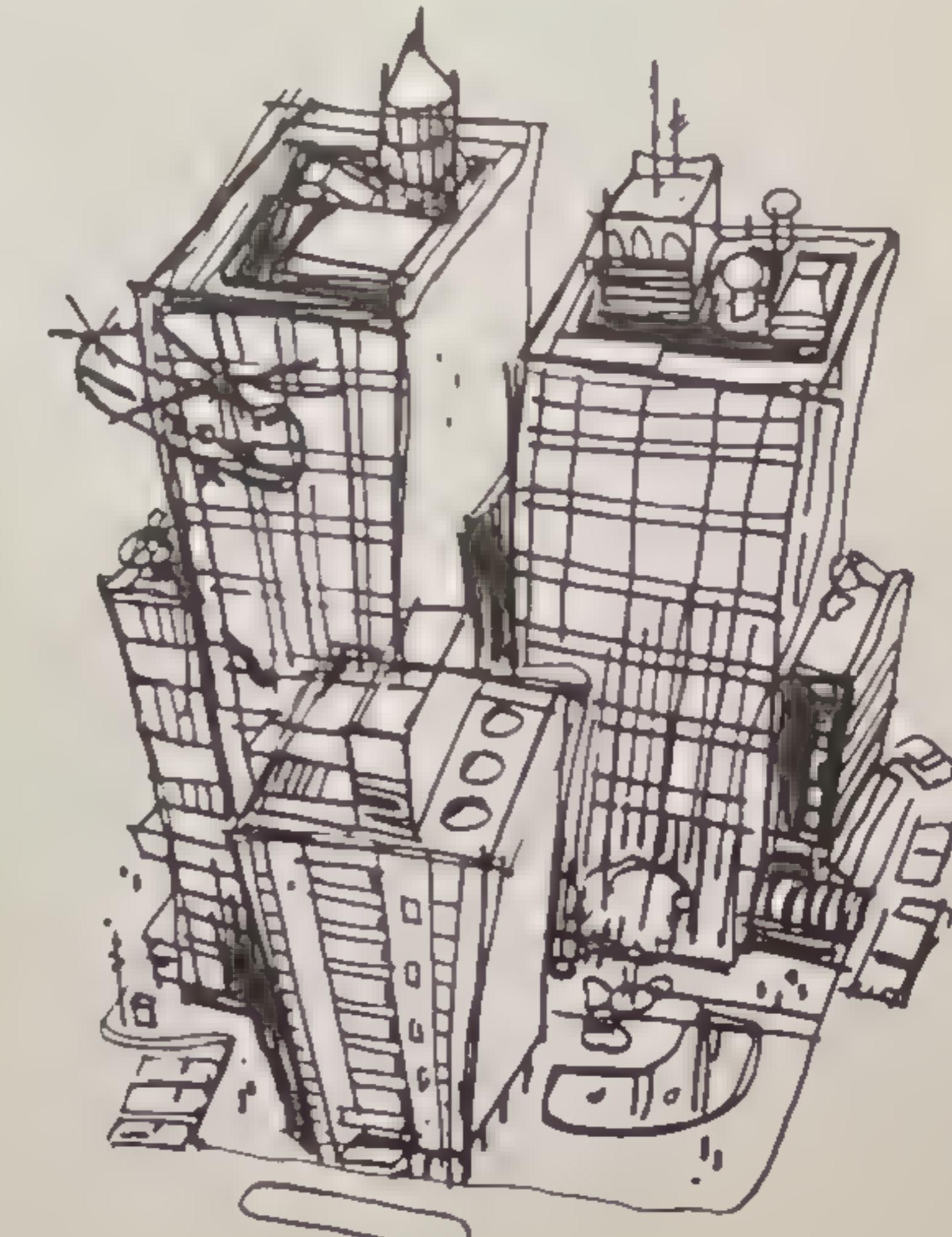
Low eye level



Middle eye level



High eye level



One-point perspective

You've seen that parallel lines that reach back into the distance look as though they gradually draw closer together. If your view is unobstructed, and the parallel lines continue far enough, you can see that they finally meet on the horizon or eye level and vanish from sight. In drawing, this illusion is called perspective with one vanishing point, or one-point perspective.

The sketches on this page demonstrate one-point perspective used in three different situations: in the long corridor of an art gallery, down a stretch of track and at a railroad station from an extremely low eye level. These are only three possibilities for drawing one-point perspective. There are hundreds of others. Whenever you want to show parallel lines reaching into the third dimension—even if your stage is as shallow as a shoe box—the lines should be drawn so that, if extended, they would meet at one point on the eye level.



Note the number of lines that converge at that faraway point on the horizon. Imaginary lines suggested by the telephone poles and the row of trees strengthen the illusion of depth here



Parallel lines converge at the end of this long corridor. Following the same narrowing path, windows and ceiling arches (and the spaces between them) diminish in size as they move toward that point on the eye level

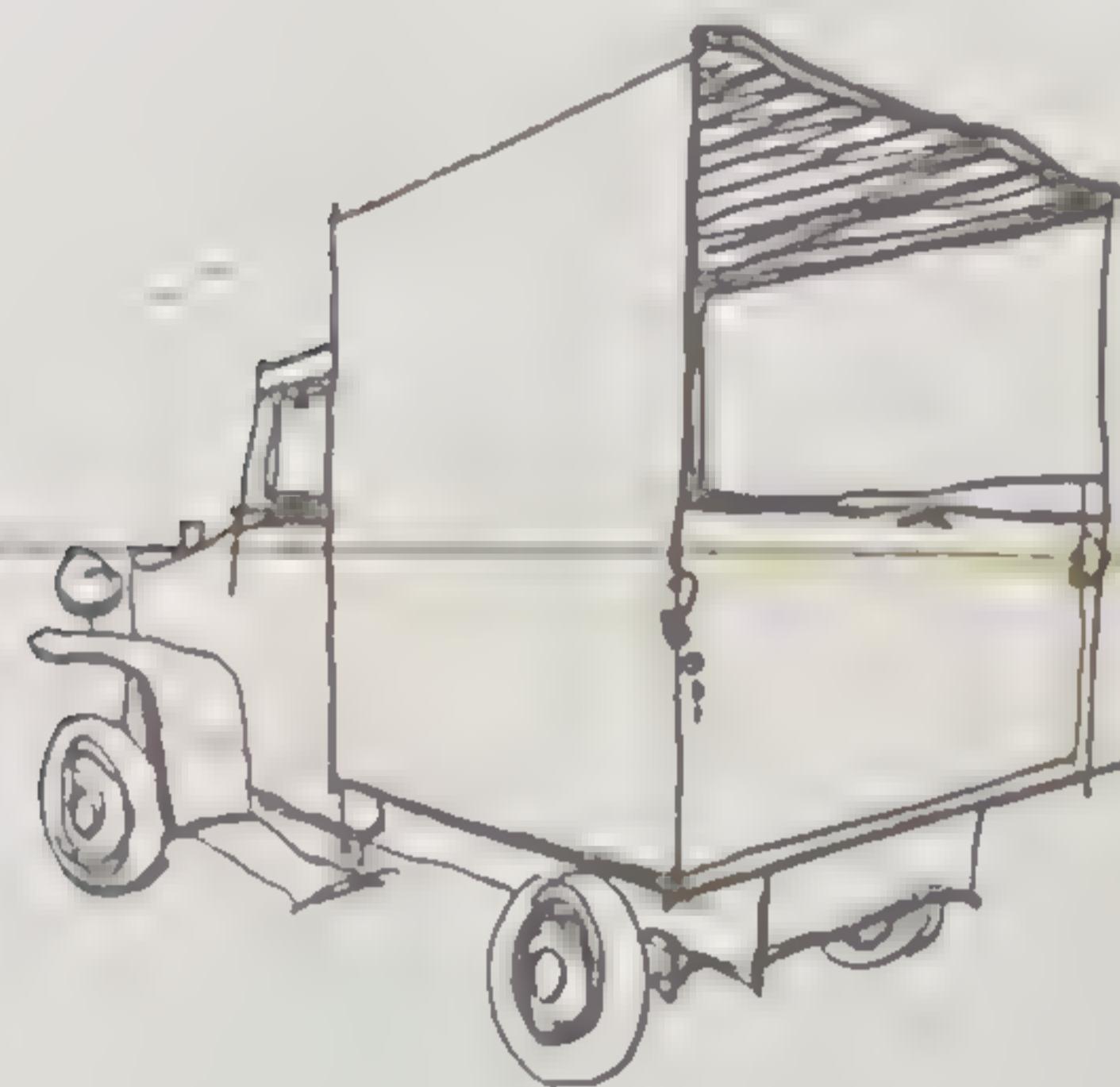
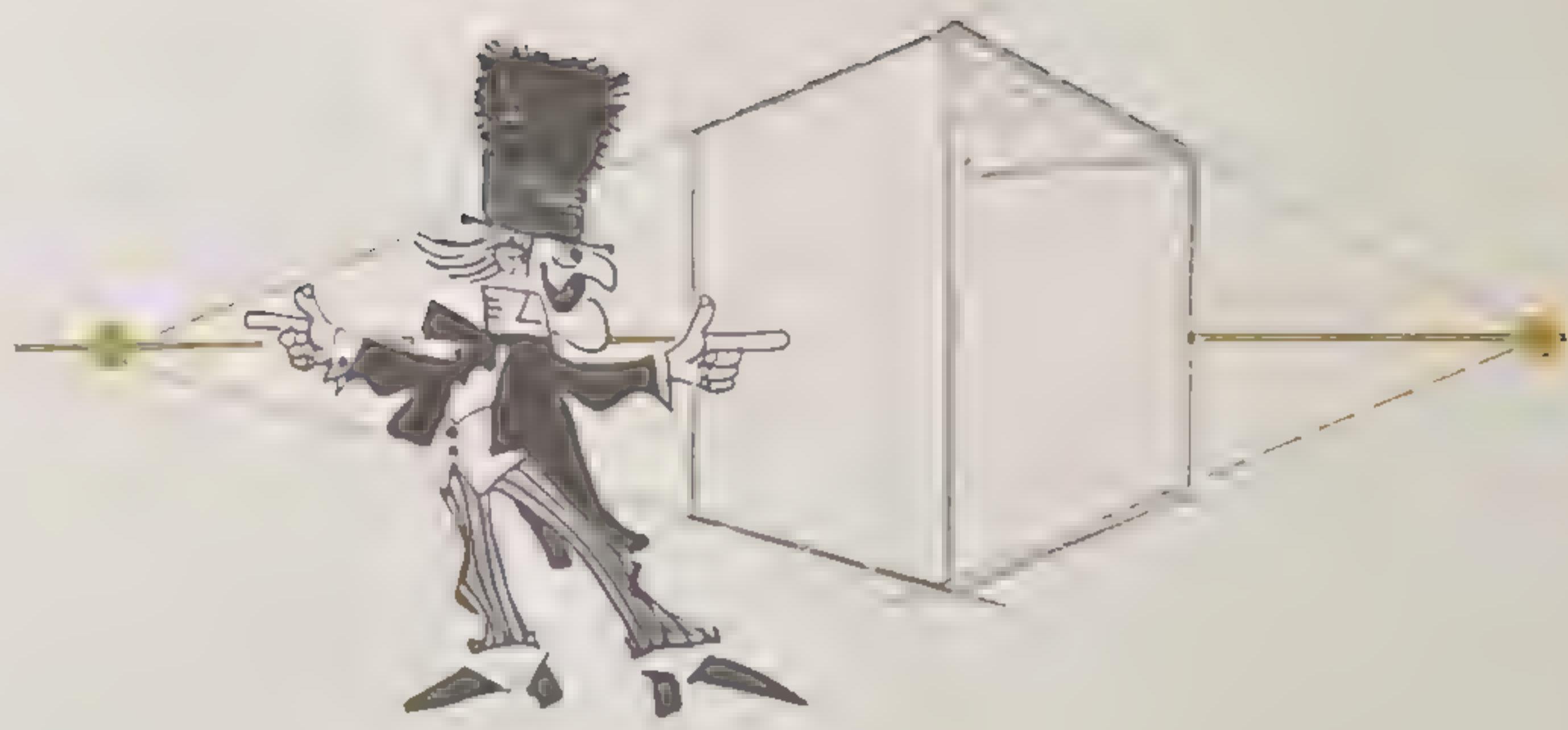


At a very low eye level, parallel lines come together much more abruptly, more dramatically. Compare this picture of a railroad station with the one above. They demonstrate the contrasts in feeling you can get just by changing your point of view.

Two-point perspective

You see things in two-point perspective when you look at them from an angle, rather than straight on. Imagine looking into the corner of a room, for example, or at one corner of a building. Or look at the angle of a large box, like the one at right. You'll see that the two top edges seem to slant downward as they move away from the corner; that the two bottom edges seem to slant upward. Now imagine that these lines continue into space in their fixed slanting courses. Eventually, at two points—one on either side of the box—top and bottom lines will slant right into each other.

The sketches below show how you would handle two-point perspective in drawing three different subjects, viewed from a corner angle. You'll note that the same rules of eye level and vanishing points apply, whether you're looking at the near angle of a building or truck, or the far angle of a room.



Here the van of the truck sits at the same angle as the box above. The broken lines extend the top and bottom of the van beyond the truck to the points at which they meet at the eye level. If the artist had extended other horizontal lines such as the top of the cab or the imaginary lines of the wheels, they, too, would have ended at these two points.



Here, even though this angle is the exact opposite of the other two, the same principles of two-point perspective are the ones for you to follow. The floor lines and ceiling lines which slant toward each other as they move closer to the corner of the room would, if continued, meet at two points at the eye level



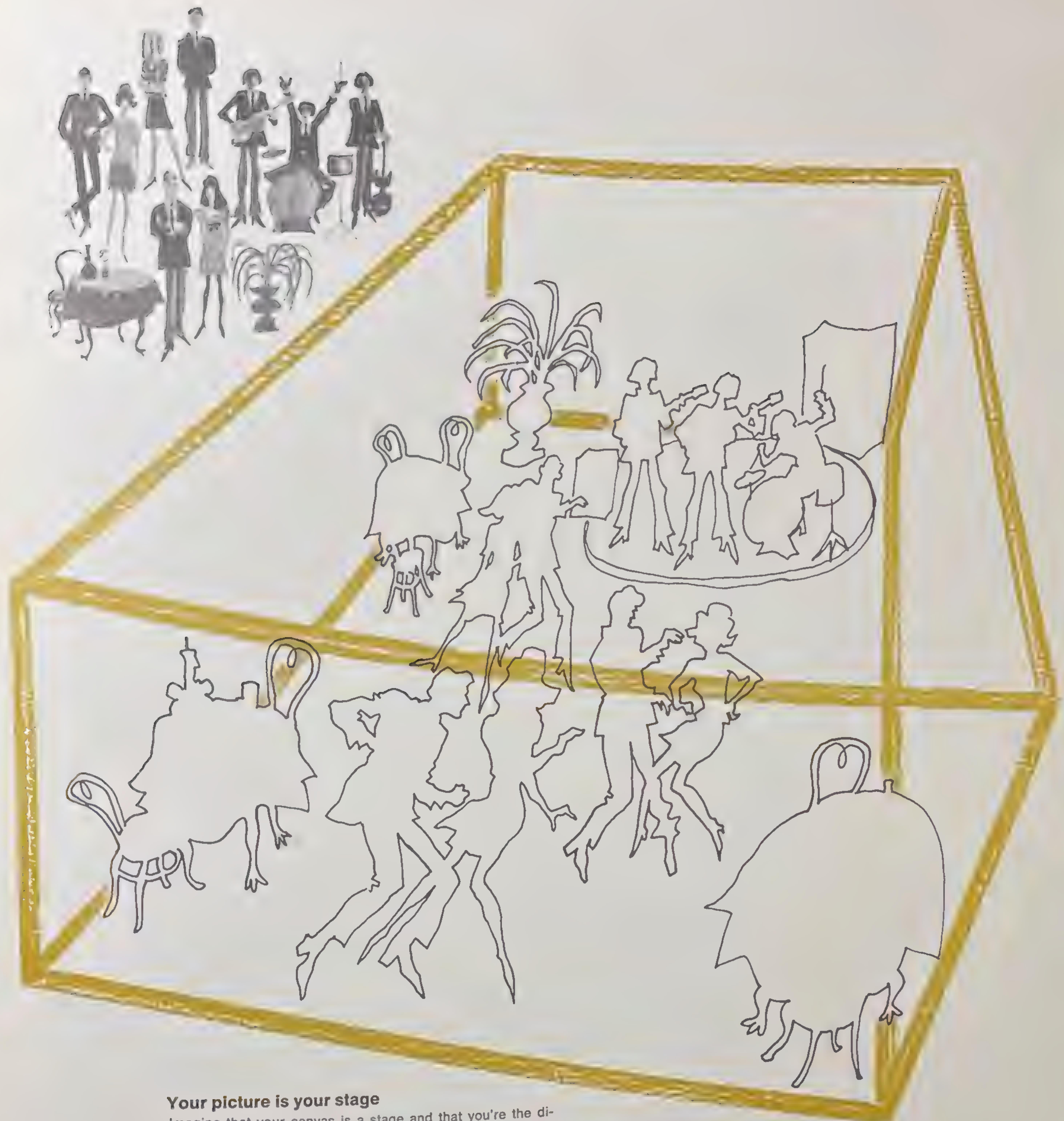
Basically, this is the same box shape as the one above and at left. This time, though, it's a house on a city block. Imagine the lines formed by the window ledges, the awnings, the steps, the sidewalks, the foundation and the arrow on the street light. They all reach toward the same two vanishing points

Draw in perspective

Books and birdcages, porches, trucks and telephone lines, roads and rivers and moving vans—there are thousands and thousands of objects that you can draw well in perspective if you use what you've learned about vanishing point and eye level.

We'd like you to work with these two principles by making perspective drawings of many things you see around you that have three-dimensional geometric shapes. If perspective is still fairly new to you, you might want to start with simple things like boxes, billboards or picture frames. Then, as you grow familiar with the idea of perspective drawing, try more challenging subjects. And don't forget that you can get different effects with the same subject, just by changing your eye level.





Your picture is your stage

Imagine that your canvas is a stage and that you're the director. You're the boss; you're free to maneuver your characters in whatever way you wish. You'll decide where everything should go, which elements in your picture should have starring roles, which will have bit parts, which may be only walk-ons. It will be up to you to determine how deep the stage should be, and what props you'll need to make the set complete. This is a helpful way of visualizing your picture in three dimensions.

Now you're all set to cut up your paper cutouts and set them on a three-dimensional stage. Your characters and props are on the facing page. Cut them out and follow the directions just as they're shown in the photographs. Try as many picture ideas as you can think of—even with these few elements there are dozens and dozens of possibilities. Be sure to look at every arrangement through the viewer. It will give you an idea of what your picture would look like on canvas, inside a picture frame.



1 With a pair of scissors, cut out the bucking horse, the cowboy, the two standing men, the fence and the tree. Cut only along the solid lines.



2 Fold the cutouts, as indicated by the broken lines. After folding the horse, glue the two sides of his head and neck together. Leave his legs apart so he'll be able to stand alone.



3 Draw your viewer or frame on a piece of stiff paper by ruling out a rectangle 3 by 4 inches, then drawing a border around it about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Cut the frame out.

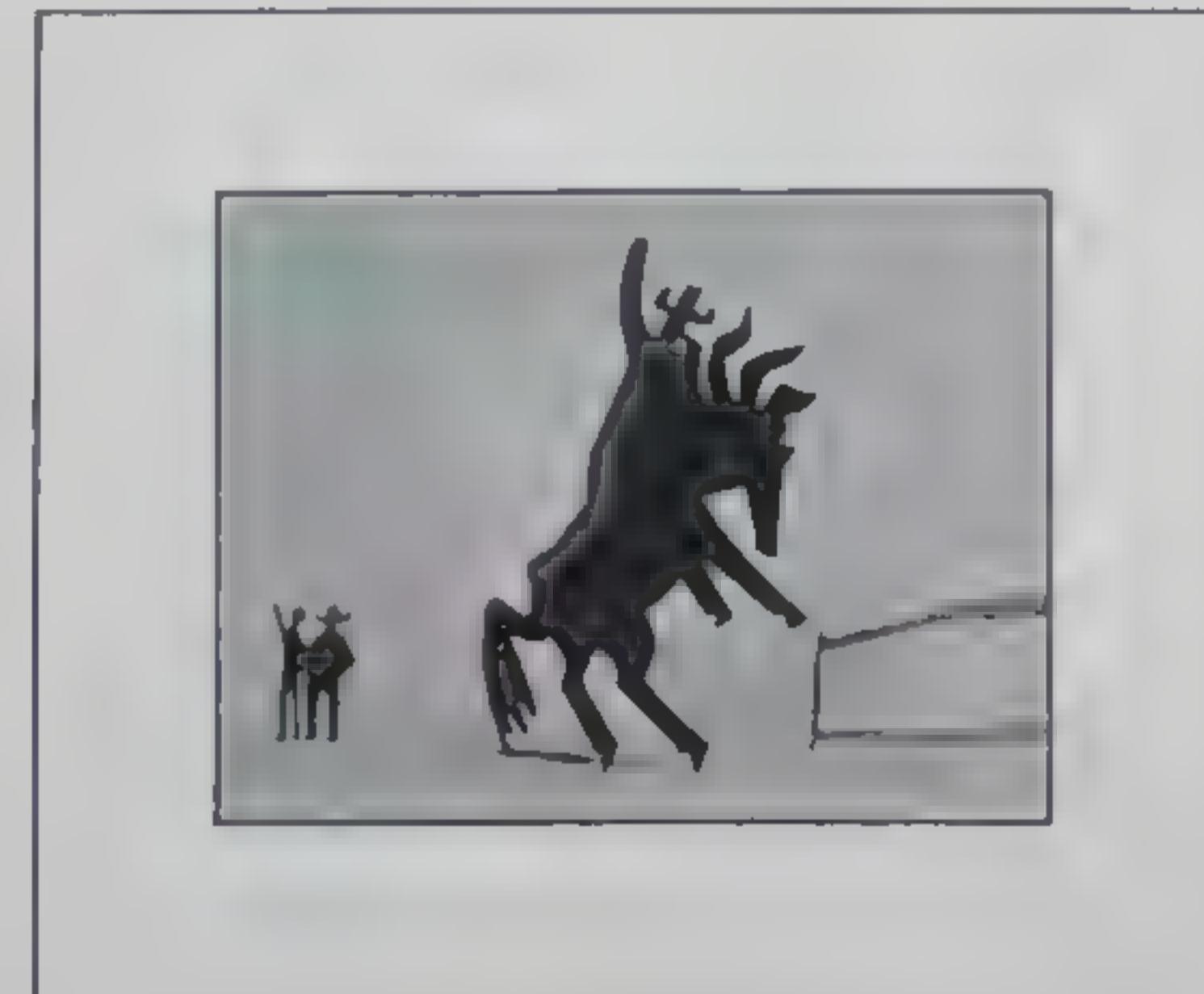
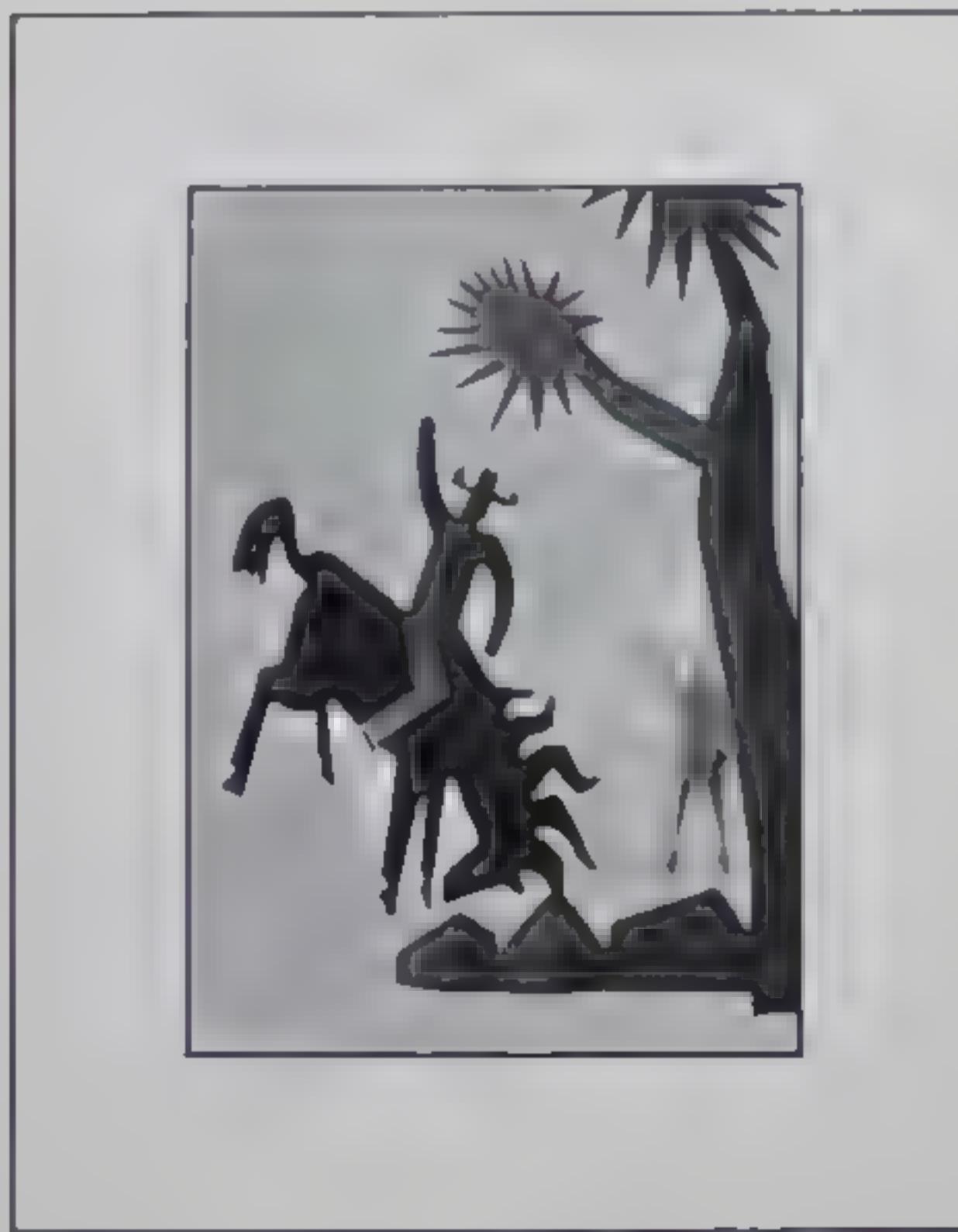
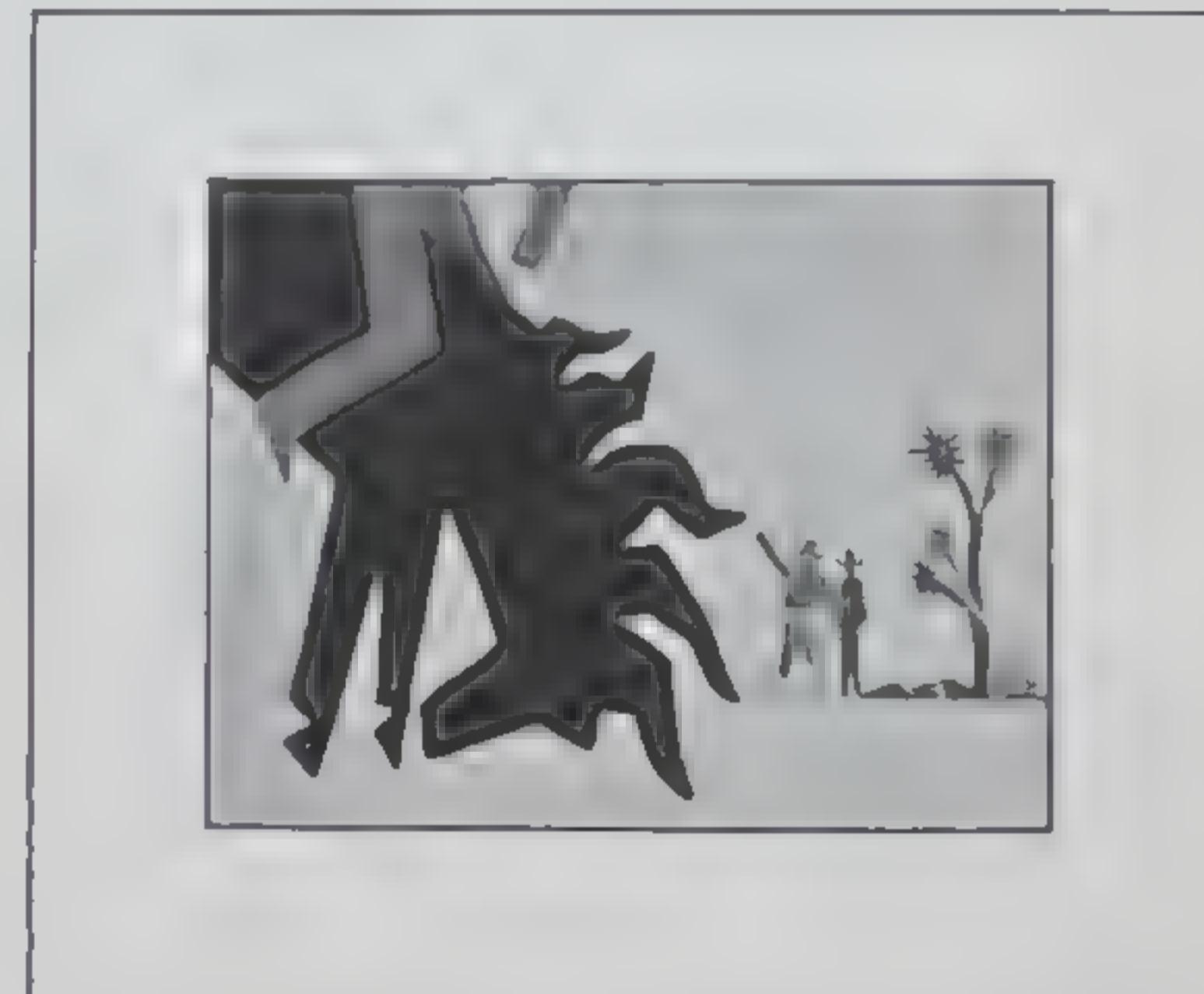



4 Set up your props and characters in an arrangement that you like, and then look at the whole scene through your paper frame. Seeing it within the frame will help you imagine it as a picture composition.

Test your ideas

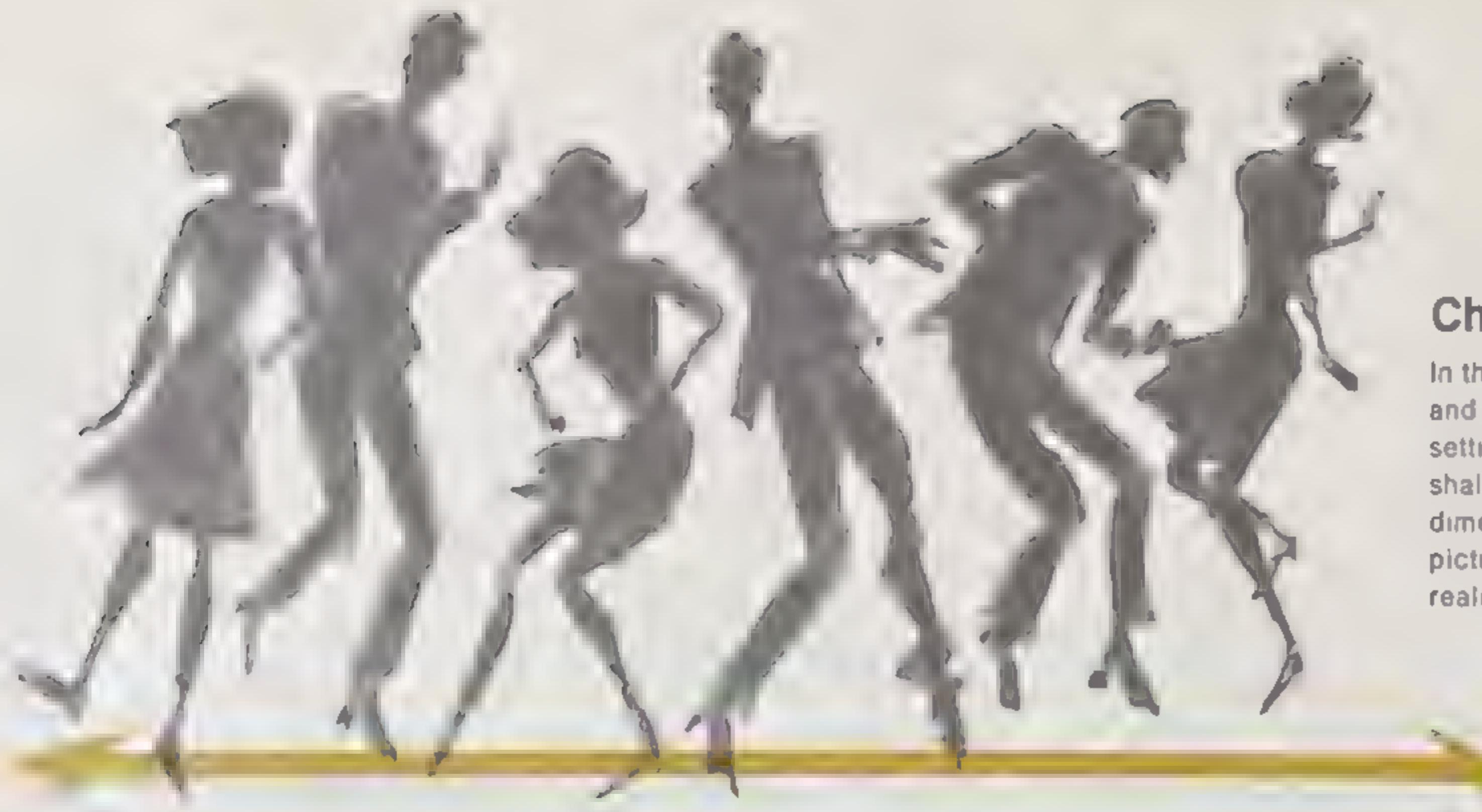
Don't use all the characters or props for every arrangement; see what you can come up with by eliminating one or two. Or see how many compositions you can create with just the tree, horse and rider. Try setting up some scenes on a very deep stage, then try others on a very shallow one. Experiment with your viewer, looking through it from a variety of angles. Move in, move away. The more you play around with your frame and these little cutouts, the more you'll discover about picture-making.

This process of trying out different compositional possibilities by rearranging elements, eliminating or adding some, testing different depth effects, relating colors and shapes, often discarding one whole picture idea and starting all over again, is the process that every artist in the world goes through—at least in his head—whenever he plans a picture.









Choose your depth

In this diagram the figures are about the same size and are placed on the same level. This is a way of setting your stage when you want to keep it so shallow that the emphasis is on shape and two-dimensional design. In fact it works well for any picture in which you don't want a feeling of deep, realistic space.



Here we begin to feel a third dimension. By overlapping the figures, drawing the rear ones smaller and placing them higher in the picture, we make them move back into space. The viewer is kept from going very deep into the picture, though, by the arrangement and size of the central characters. You can use this limited degree of depth when you want to closely involve your viewer.



This arrangement carries the eye much further into the picture than the one above because the figures at the rear are still smaller. Try this solution when you want to give the impression of considerable depth. The important thing to remember is that the extent of depth in your picture is up to you — use as much or as little to best say what you want to say about your subject.



The Artist's Studio
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Courtesy New York Graphic Society

In this lifelike painting, Vermeer not only controlled his perspective beautifully, he arranged his subject in a way that leads our eye carefully back into the picture, strengthening the illusion of realistic depth. The diagram below shows an imaginary top view of the painting to help you visualize its third dimension.



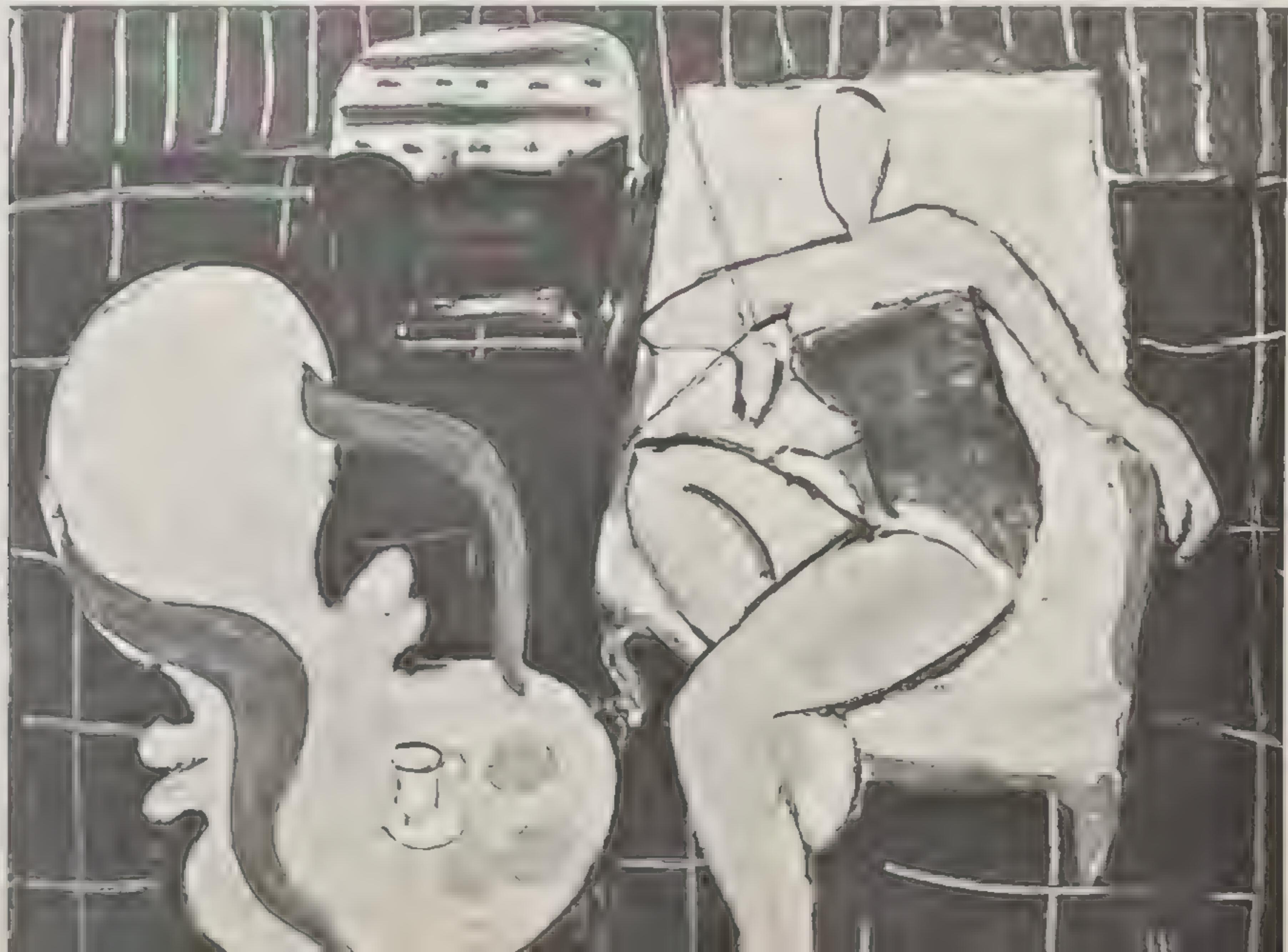
How much depth?

Depth in a picture can reach as far as you wish—even to infinity. In these paintings, we see three different uses of depth in picture space—the realistic dimensions in the Vermeer, above, the compressed depth of the Matisse, below, and the near-flatness of Miró's fantasy on the facing page.

Each of these artists used the kind of space he thought

worked best in expressing his particular pictorial idea. One of the decisions you'll make in your own picture-making will be your answer to the question above: How much depth? Think about it carefully because it's an important decision. The amount of depth you use will be a big factor in how well, how expressively your picture is composed.

Dancer and Armchair, Black Background
Collection of Mrs. Marcel Duchamp



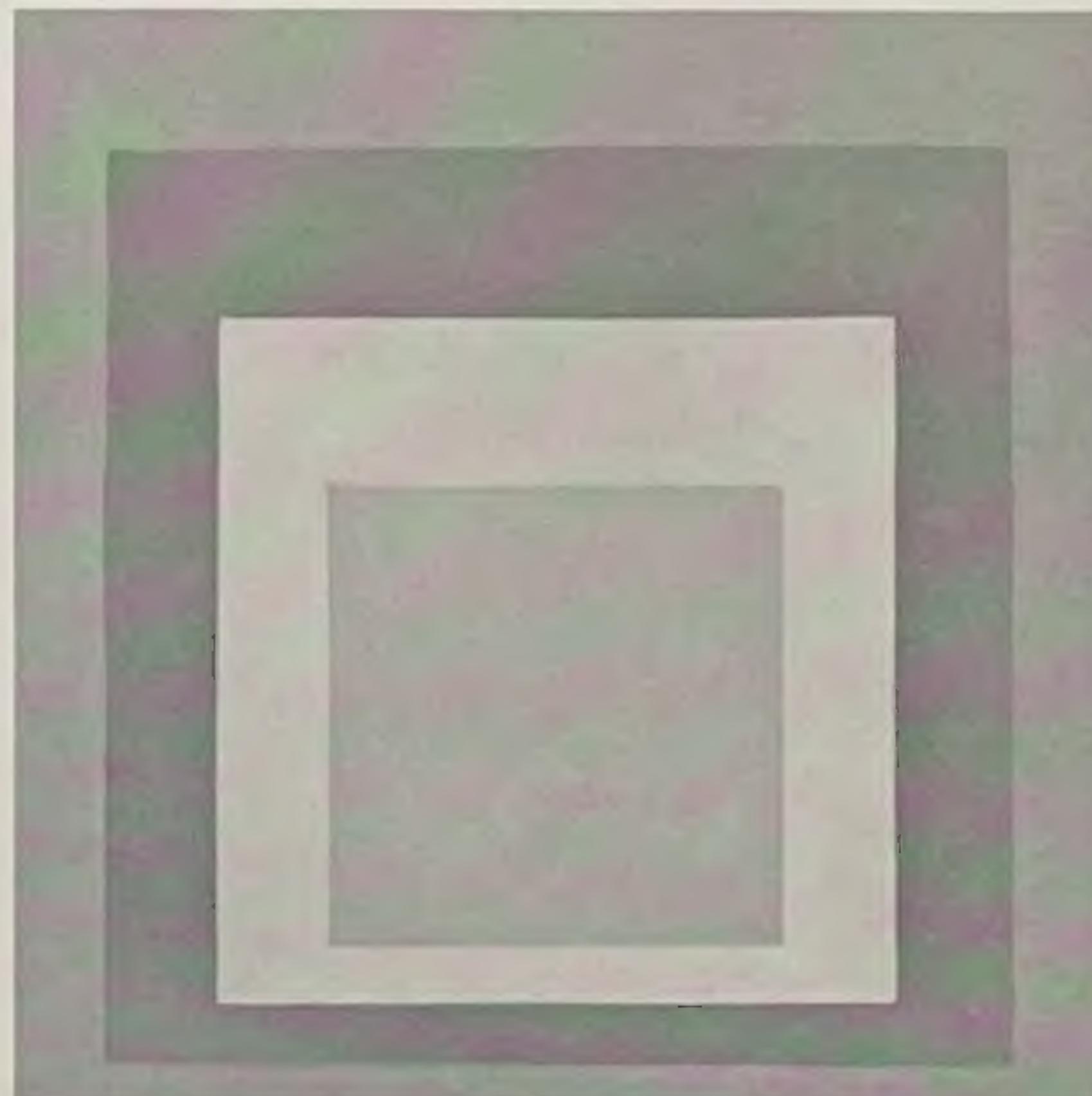
Matisse compressed depth in this painting and almost flattened the forms of the girl and chairs. His interest was not in drawing perspective accurately, but in using the recognizable forms in his picture as elements in a design

Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird, 1926, Joan Miró
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase



With no more than a suggestion of depth for his stage, and with odd, whimsical forms that look as flat as cutouts, Miró created a fantasy world that is far, far removed from the comfortable, recognizable one of Vermeer — yet just as real on its own terms.

Homage to the Square: "Ascending"
Collection Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Don't forget the role that color plays in creating depth. Do you remember this painting by Josef Albers? Turn back to it again (page 7, Section 5) and see how his arrangement of colors conveys a feeling of three-dimensional space.

Putting yourself into your pictures

Every picture is a kind of self-portrait, no matter what its subject is. We always see in it something of the artist, by the way he arranges his picture, by the palette he chooses, by his medium and style. Of course, we shouldn't go too far in reading this sort of thing into a picture; it gives us only a glimpse of the painter, not his likeness. Even the glimpse is fleeting, because in another mood, in another time, he might paint the same picture in quite a different way.

Now we want you to paint this kind of self-portrait, with a chair for your subject. On these two pages are five such paintings. Each is unique in style, colors, composition and flavor, yet every one had its beginning with the chair in the photograph at right. Study them carefully. One or another might trip your creative imagination because it's close to your own style. You can use our chair or one of your own; you can draw or paint it in any medium, in any way you choose. Whatever way that may be, you'll be the subject behind the subject in your picture.



You may be the kind of person who likes to paint the world in a literal way. You like to try to catch in paint the look of texture and light, you want to get as close as you can to putting forms and colors on canvas as truly as you see them. It might help you to study some of the realists. Vermeer would be a good subject for study. So would Norman Rockwell, Andrew Wyeth and David Harnett.



Maybe you don't like to be held to the forms and colors that you see; your way is to paint freely, not bound by the restrictions of subject matter. Even when you start with a subject, like the chair, you use it only as a source of ideas from which to leap off on your own artistic explorations. You'd probably like Jackson Pollock's expressive action paintings, the slashing, powerful works of deKooning, or Kandinsky's lyrical abstractions.

You may like most of all the expressive effects you can get from pure black and white. The graphic impact of black-and-white decoration and design is all around us these days—in fabrics, in billboard, television, magazine and newspaper advertising, on paperback and magazine and record covers. If this approach appeals to you now, watch for the work of artists like Giusti and Frasconi. And look up the later works of Matisse. His delightful drawings lift pure design to the level of art.

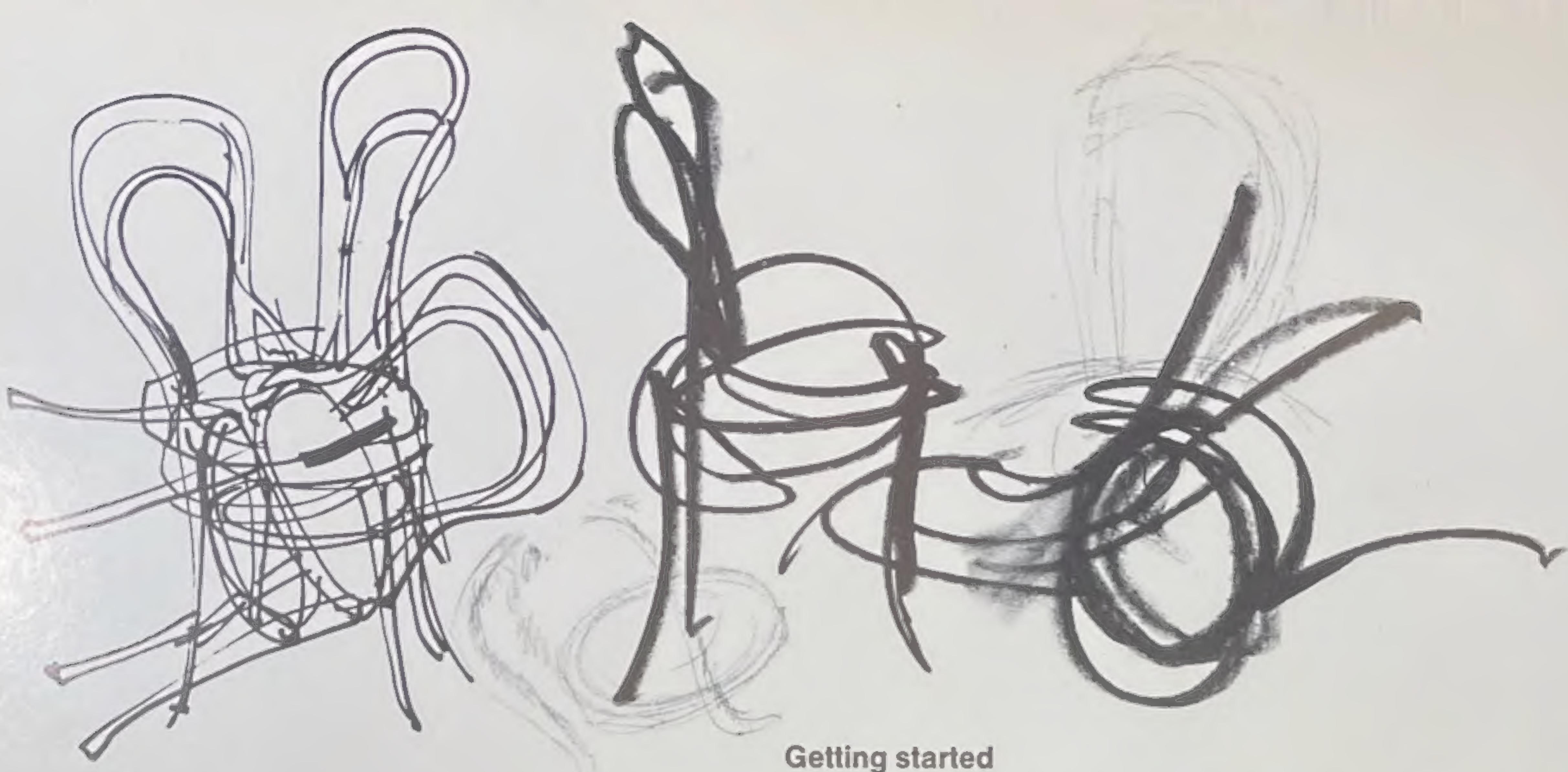


Maybe you thrive on excitement. You like action, jazz; you like clear, concise shapes and colors that are intense and bold and surprising. You like art that stuns the eye. Sensation and shock are what you're after—you're about as far as you can get from the serenity that marks the softly painted interior on the facing page. If this is you, you probably find lots to like in the art of Stuart Davis and in the jumping, vibrating, eye-assaulting colors of the Op artists.



Do you like mystery and illusion? Do you like paintings that take you into a weird fantasy world? Do you like to paint pictures like that? The Surrealists do, too. They may paint an object in a very realistic way, and put it in a puzzling, elusive setting. Or they may, like Miró in the painting on page 23, create landscapes and objects that are as unreal as a dream. If you like pictures like these, pictures that don't quite explain themselves, you'd probably enjoy looking at other works by Miró. Study Dali, too, and Tanguy and Edwin Dickinson.





Getting started

After looking at the paintings on the last two pages, you may draw a blank when you sit down to start your own. Where to begin? What medium to use? What size? What mood? Every artist freezes like this sometimes, and the only way to get over it is to plunge. Begin with doodles, if you feel like it. Sometimes just getting into motion will start your creative energies. The gesture sketches you've been doing are fine beginning exercises. Try switching mediums or tools if you aren't getting anywhere.

You might draw one view of the chair and then superimpose another view right over the first. This helps jar you from thinking in the same old way, and might lead to a brand-new approach. If you're used to starting a drawing by following the outside contours of your subject, start in the middle and work outward, perhaps with crosshatch lines. Start at any point in the chair and let your pen or pencil line take a walk — up and down the curves of the back, on down the legs, around the seat — without lifting it from the paper.

You may surprise yourself. What starts as a warm-up sketch could turn into a finished drawing. If it doesn't, just keep playing around. You'll hit on just the right approach before long.

